



SMOKE SIGNALS

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Halloween 2025
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Halloween Edition

Featuring Terrifying
Transportation!

Cursed Cars, Ghost Ships,
Spooky Trains, Gravity Hills,
Haunted Roads and
Phantom Planes!

Happy Halloween!

Welcome to Halloween 2025! Since we are a car club, I decided to do this year's Halloween newsletter all about transportation! Inside, you'll find stories about cursed cars, ghostly ships, haunted roads, phantom planes, spooky trains and a strange phenomena called "gravity hills".

Do you believe in curses? Or ghosts? Can a place hold a memory like water in a bottle? I can't answer these questions. What I can do is tell you some stories.

Did you know that James Dean's car didn't just kill James Dean? Or that ghostly ships and trains haunt places across the country and in one case may have predicted the future? Have you ever heard of places where things roll uphill? Ever travel a dark, lonely road at night and think maybe you weren't alone? Can an airplane be haunted or just vanish? Have I got some tales for you.

So, sit back and let me take you on a journey down fog-covered streets on a search for some of the scariest modes of transportation.

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Cursed Cars



Arch Duke Ferdinand's Phaeton

3

The 1910 Graf and Stift Double Phaeton sitting in Vienna's Heeresgeschichtliches Museum doesn't look sinister. In fact, it's a beautiful old car. At the time it was made, Graf and Stift, bicycle makers only a few years before, made some of the best luxury automobiles. It's the history behind the car that makes it infamous.

Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, were scheduled to tour Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. It was common, as today, for royalty to have chauffeurs. It was also common practice for members of the Austrian royal family to borrow a car at their destination. This automobile was loaned to them by Count Franz von Harrach, a logistics officer serving with the Austrian army transport corps. Important to our story, Ferdinand's driver was completely unfamiliar with the car. Also important is the fact that Serbian nationalist students turned would-be assassins were posted all along the route.

Early in the day, one of these students threw a bomb at the Archduke's car. The bomb bounced off of the folded convertible top, doing no harm to the royal couple, but it went under the following vehicle, exploding and wounding several in the Archduke's entourage. This caused the Archduke to alter his route. After a brief rest at the Governor's residence, Archduke Ferdinand and his wife decided to visit the injured. The would-be assassins, failing in their attempt, gave up for the day and dispersed. The new route was cleared for the Archduke, but the driver made a wrong turn. Realizing the error, the driver attempted a multi-point U-turn and, unfamiliar with the car, stalled it half-way through the U-turn.

Unfortunately, the car stalled about five feet in front of where one the assassins from earlier had decided to get some food at a local cafe. Seeing his chance, Gavrilo Princip, not able to use the bomb he had with him, raised a gun and fired two shots. By his own account, he did not aim and actually turned his head away while he fired. It turned out to not matter. One bullet struck Sophie in the stomach and the other struck Ferdinand in the jugular vein. Both wounds proved mortal. Austria declared war against Serbia, setting off a chain reaction of war declarations by both Austrian and Serbian allies, culminating in World War I and the deaths of 16 million people.

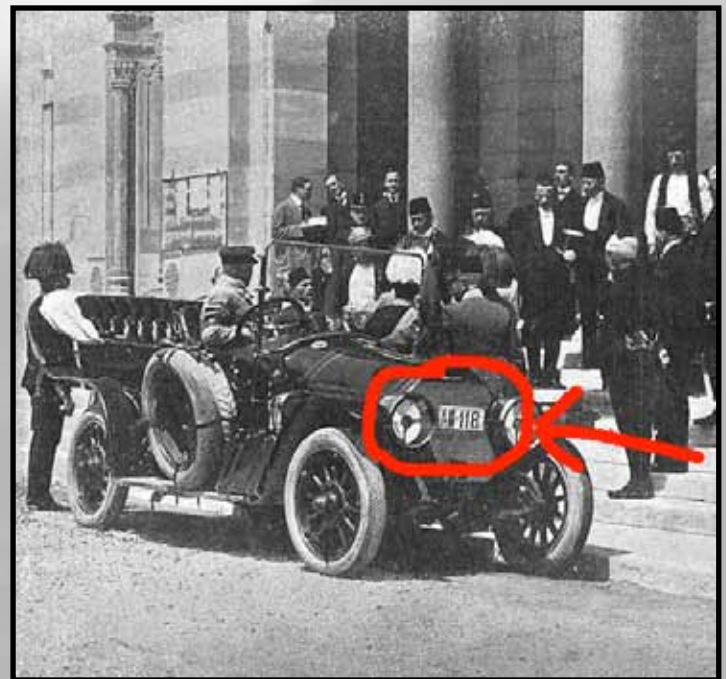
Of course, that, while tragic, would not put the car on this list. No, according to legend, following the assassination, the car, said to have a fittingly blood-red paint job, went through 15 owners in only 12 years and killed 13 people. Let's run down a partial list. An Austrian general that purchased the car went mad and died in an asylum. Another owner had the car for nine days before it struck two peasants and a tree. Another committed suicide. The governor of Yugoslavia restored the car, but after four accidents, one of which caused the loss of his right arm, decided he should destroy the car. His friend, Dr. Srikis, convinced the governor to sell him the car. After six months, the car was found overturned on the highway with the doctor crushed beneath it.

The car was bought by another doctor, but by this time the car had a reputation and his patients began leaving his practice. He sold the car to a Swiss race driver. This owner was thrown over a stone wall and fatally broke his neck. A farmer bought the car, which stalled one day and while it was being towed, suddenly sprang to life, knocked into the tow truck and killed both its owner and the truck driver. The last private person to own the car was Tiber Hirshfeld. He thought the curse could be dispelled with a new blue paint job. He was wrong. He used the car to transport him and five of his friends to a wedding. The car crashed and killed Hirshfeld and four of his friends.

Part of the legend also states that Ferdinand had premonitions of his own death, one just a month before the assassination and that Ferdinand, an avid hunter, shot a white stag in 1913, thought to be a portent of death.

Of course, these portents and premonitions can't be proven. And neither can the long list of accidents and deaths. In fact, the car is neither blood-red or blue, but still has scars from the bomb, suggesting the current color is original. And for all its many supposed accidents, which should have left it totaled or significantly damaged several times over, it's in fairly good condition. In fact, stories of the cursed car can only be traced back to 1959 and Frank Edwards's book *Stranger than Science*. Edwards wrote several sensational books about the paranormal and was, shall we say, untroubled by the truth in pursuit of a good story.

One eerie thing about the car is absolutely true however. The car had been on display for decades in the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum before a British visitor, Brian Presland, noticed a strange thing about the license plate: AIII 118. If you turn the capital I's into the number 1, it becomes a date, 11/11/18, or November 11, 1918, the date of the end of World War I. One might think that this is not the original plate, but a photo of the car taken just as it made the wrong turn on that fateful day shows the plate number it bears today.



James Dean's Little Bastard

4

James Dean loved cars and he loved racing. During the filming of his latest movie, *Giant*, the studio wouldn't allow him to race. But now the movie was done and Dean was ready to rejoin the world of racing. And he decided he would do it in a silver Porsche 550 Spyder that he purchased on September 21, 1955 and named "Little Bastard". At the time it was one of the world's fastest cars, with a top speed of 143 mph, it could go from 0-60 in just 8.2 seconds and run the quarter-mile in just under 16 seconds. Unfortunately, the car was built for speed, not safety. It was made of aluminum and a minor accident could total the car, so of the 90 Spyders built, very few survive today.

Not long after Dean purchased the car, he showed it to his friend, Alec Guinness. Guinness didn't like something about the car. He wrote in his diary, "The sports car looked sinister to me ... exhausted, hungry, feeling a little ill-tempered in spite of Dean's kindness, I heard myself saying in a voice I could hardly recognise as my own: 'Please never get in it... if you get in that car you will be found dead in it by this time next week.'"

Dean paid no attention to his friend and began prepping the car for the Sports Car Club of America race in Salinas with his mechanic, Rolf Wütherich, and stuntman Bill Hickman. Originally, they planned to tow the Spyder to the race, but Wütherich thought it would be better to drive the car there and get used to the way it drove while breaking it in before the race.

On September 30, 1955, Dean was driving the car with Wütherich in the passenger seat. Hickman followed behind with a truck and trailer. On the way there, both Dean and Hickman were issued speeding tickets for going 70mph. Despite this, Dean continued speeding. Travelling on Route 46, his speed was later estimated at 85mph (though modern computer models estimate 60 mph), when a student from California Polytechnic State University, Donald Turnupseed, made a sudden left turn onto Route 46 in front of Dean at about 5:45PM. The Ford Tudor Turnupseed was driving ended up 40 feet down the road. Wütherich was ejected from the car and survived,

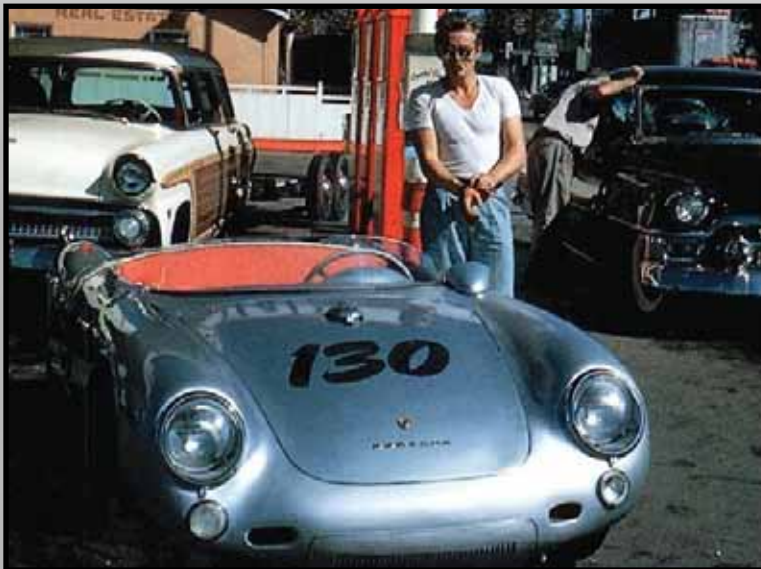
as did Turnupseed. Dean suffered a broken neck, fractured skull and multiple other injuries and was declared dead at the hospital at 6:20PM. Oddly, Wütherich would die in a different car accident in Germany while he was working for Porsche.

The car was declared totaled by the insurance company, but Dr. William Eschrich, a racing acquaintance of Dean's, bought the car for parts. He put the engine into his Lotus IX race car and loaned the transmission and part of the suspension to his friend, Troy McHenry. Both crashed at the 1956 Pomona Road Race. Eschrich survived, but McHenry was unfortunate enough to hit the only tree on the course during the first lap of the race and died as a result.

Shortly after, George Barris bought the car, hoping to restore it, though several people noticed that the car he had was in better condition than the car shown in photos of James Dean's crash. When it became apparent that restoration was impossible, Barris sent the car on tour with the Los Angeles chapter of the National Safety Council from 1957 to 1959. There are unconfirmed stories that the car had a habit of falling from its display, injuring at least one bystander and killing a truck driver transporting the car, George Barkus. During this time, Barris sold two tires from the car, which blew at the same time and caused the driver to careen off the road. In March 1959, while in storage, the car somehow caught fire.

Finally, in 1960, while being transported in a sealed box car from Miami to Los Angeles, the car simply disappeared. Despite a \$1 million reward, nothing was heard about the car until 2015, when a man contacted the director of the Volo Auto Museum with a story. The man claimed at age six he had witnessed his father, George Barris and some others hide the car inside a false wall of a building in Washington State. The man passed a polygraph test, but as not able to get his hands on the car and afterwards the building was demolished, and possibly Dean's car with it.

The only remaining part from Dean's car is a transaxle discovered in Massachusetts in March 2020. After McHenry's crash, his widow sold his car and the transaxle ended up in Massachusetts. It sold at an online auction for \$387,000 and is now in Zak Bagan's Haunted Museum in Las Vegas.



Ghost Ships



Flying Dutchman

The Flying Dutchman, portent of doom, condemned to sail the seas forever, is a very well-known legend. The first printed reference is in a 1790 book, *Travels in various part of Europe, Asia and Africa during a series of thirty years and upward* by John MacDonald. It is next mentioned in 1795 in *A Voyage to Botany Bay* by George Barrington. Thomas Moore wrote about it in 1804 and Sir Walter Scott wrote about it in 1812. Paintings of it hang in the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Delaware Art Museum. Famous German composer, Richard Wagner adapted it into an opera.

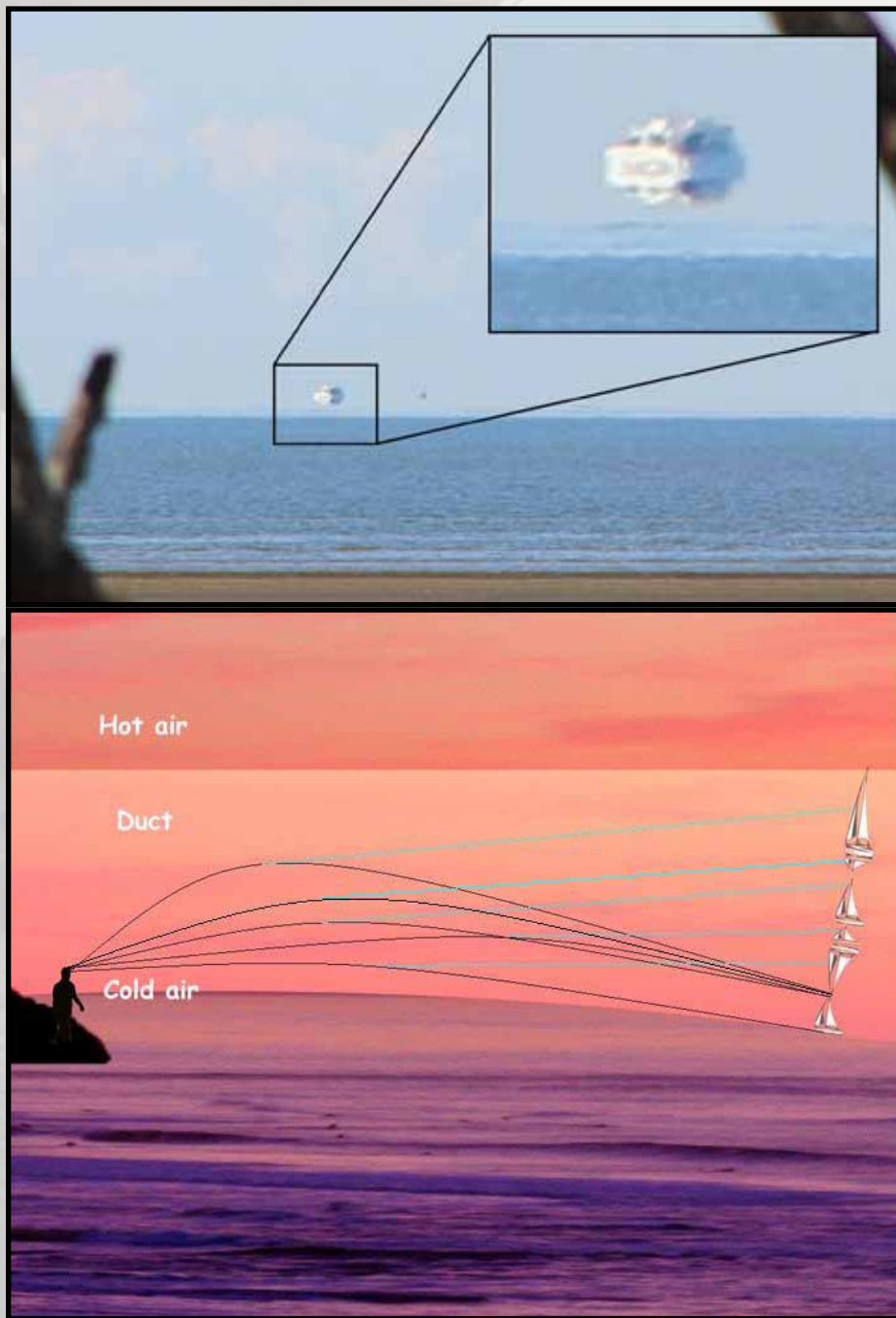
The story could trace back to a captain from Freisland, Bernard Fokke. He was known for his incredibly fast trips from the Dutch Republic to Java, a trip which only took him three months and four days in 1678, a trip that normally took about eight months. The trips were so unbelievably fast that it was rumored that he was in league with Satan himself.

Others trace the story back to Captain Hendrick van der Decken making the trip from Holland to the Far East Indies in 1641 for silks, spices and dyes. Having filled the ship with such valuable merchandise, he set sail back to Holland. As he rounded the Cape of Good Hope, a storm sprang up, prompting the crew to urge their captain to turn around. Captain van der Decken refused and the crew mutinied. Captain van der Decken killed the leader of the mutiny and threw the body into the sea. When the body hit the water, a voice asked the captain if he was going to seek shelter in the bay for the night. Reportedly, Van der Decken replied: "May I be eternally damned if I do, though I should beat about here till the day of judgment." The voice responded, "As a result of your actions you are condemned to sail the oceans for eternity with a ghostly crew of dead men bringing death to all who sight your spectral ship and to never make port or know a moment's peace."

And since then, the Flying Dutchman (used interchangeably for the ship and its captain) has wandered the globe, never able to make port. There have been many sightings, with perhaps the most famous being by the future King George V, his brother Prince Albert Victor and their tutor John Neill Dalton on July 11, 1181 on a voyage that brought them off the coast of Australia. There, George recorded in his diary, "4 a.m. the Flying Dutchman crossed our bows. A strange red light as of a phantom ship all aglow." It is said to appear with violent storms and is a bad omen. Some, seeing the ship, claim to hear wails and screams and to see the pale damned souls of the crew.

Rather than a curse, the phenomena of the Flying Dutchman could be explained

by something known as Fata Morgana, named after King Arthur's half-sister, the sorceress Morgan Le Fay. A Fata Morgana happens when shallow layers of cold air meet higher levels of warmer air which creates something like a refracting lens, bending the light traveling between the two air masses, causing mirror images, images that appear to hover in the sky or magnifying objects beyond the horizon. The trouble with this theory is that Fata Morgana are more likely in calm conditions, whereas the Flying Dutchman appears in storms, and are more common nearer the polar regions, so any sighting of the Flying Dutchman elsewhere is less likely to be a Fata Morgana.



Above: An example of a Fata Morgana.

Below: How a Fata Morgana works.

Maine Teazer Light

During the War of 1812, the American government sanctioned privately-owned ships, known as privateers, to capture British merchant vessels in North American waters. This forced the British to deploy warships to protect their merchant fleet. One such American privateer was the Teazer, captured in December 1812, it was burned by the British and her captain, Frederick Johnson was released on parole with the promise that he would not sail against the British until exchanged for a British prisoner, upon penalty of hanging.

Teazer's owner had another ship built, named Young Teazer, with Captain William D. Dobson and First Lieutenant Frederick Johnson. Yes, that Frederick Johnson, not yet exchanged. In her short career, Young Teazer captured 12 British ships, using the coves and islands around Mahone Bay as cover. Young Teazer set out on June 3, 1813 on her second and last voyage. Around June 20, 1813, HMS Orpheus chased Young Teazer into Mahone Bay, but lost her. On June 27, HMS Hogue found Young Teazer in Mahone Bay and gave chase for 18 hours, firing on the Young Teazer and joined by HMS Orpheus. Finally, with no where left to go, Captain Dobson brought Young Teazer into water too shallow for the warships and gathered his crew to discuss their defense. The HMS Hogue had lowered small boats into the water with men planning to board the Young Teazer.

Johnson panicked. If he were caught by the British, he was sure to be hung. He argued with Dobson, then disappeared below, reappearing with a hot coal, then rushed to the gunpowder magazine. A few minutes later, Young Teazer went up in an explosion felt 12 miles away. Twenty-eight men died, nine survived and were rescued by

residents of Mahone Bay. The dead were recovered and some buried at the St. Stephen Anglican Church cemetery. After recovering, the survivors were taken to the Melville Island prisoner camp in Halifax and later exchanged.

On the first-year anniversary of the explosion, A ghost ship appeared in the fog and then disappeared. Legend says on June 27th, the flaming ghost of Young Teazer haunts Mahone Bay in a reenactment of its horrifying final moments.



Post and beam from the remains of Young Teazer at the Rope Loft in Chester, Nova Scotia.

The Palatine Light

The Palatine Light is a ghost ship that appears off the coast of Block Island, Rhode Island and is based off the historical wreck of the Princess Augusta, the facts of which are known from contemporary accounts and also from written depositions discovered in 1925.

The British ship Princess Augusta set sail from Rotterdam in August 1738 with Captain George Long, 14 crewmen and 240 German immigrants from the Palatinate region on their way to Pennsylvania and Virginia. The journey did not go well. An illness, blamed on contaminated drinking water, killed 200 of the passengers and half the crew, including Captain Long, leaving First Mate Andrew Brook in charge. Storms kept the ship at sea for three months and as supplies dwindled, Brooks forced the passengers to buy the remaining food. Those that could not pay died of starvation and were thrown into the sea. Storms eventually pushed Princess Augusta to Block Island amid a snowstorm on December 27, 1738.

After this point, two stories diverge. The first says that in an attempt to navigate between Block Island and Long Island Sound, Brook ran aground and then rowed to shore with the rest of the crew, leaving what remained of the passengers behind to fend for themselves. The residents of Block Island convinced Brook to go back the next day for the passengers and what little belongings they had. After they were rescued, twenty more immigrants died and were buried on Block Island. In 1947, the Block Island Historical Society placed a marker at the grave site. The ship was not able to be salvaged and was either pushed out to sea or burned.

Residents of Block Island prefer the first story, because the other paints them in a very unlovely light. Block Island can be a very dangerous place for ships, especially in 1738, before there were any lighthouses. The second version says the residents of Block Island took advantage of this by luring ships close to shore with false signal lights, causing them to wreck. The islanders would board the vessel, kill everyone they found, plunder the ship and then burn it to cover their tracks and make room for more ships.

Both of these versions agree that one passenger was left behind. Either driven mad by the voyage or just too frightened to leave the ship (or in the second version, hiding from the wreckers), she was still on board when the ship caught fire.

Legend says that on the first anniversary of the wreck, the flaming ghost ship was seen and has been seen many times since, between Christmas and New Year's Eve. The first written record of the Palatine Light occurs in 1811 in History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations by islander Dr. Aaron C. Willey. Willey had seen the Palatine Light himself, but thought that there was some scientific explanation. Others think the ghost ship is a horrible reenactment of the tragic events or a bringer of ill omens for the residents of Block Island who may have caused it. According to legend, the ghostly ship appears, then bursts into flames and sinks into the

water, accompanied by the screams of the woman that was left behind.

Because of the danger to sailors, two lighthouses were built: Block Island North Light in 1829 and Block Island Southeast Light in 1875. All too late for the Princess Augusta.



Marker placed by the Block Island Historical Society in 1947, marking the graves of the 20 immigrants from the Princess Augusta that died on Block Island.



Ghost Trains

Iredell County Ghost Train

Here's a textbook story of a ghost train, but with a twist that has killed at least one man more than a hundred years after it crashed.

Richmond & Danville train No. 9 left Statesville, North Carolina on August 27, 1891 at about 2:30AM, pulling a baggage car, a first-class passenger car, a second-class passenger car, a Pullman sleeper and the railroad

superintendent's private car. By this time, it was already 34 minutes behind schedule, so to make up for lost time the train increased speed. Less than five minutes after leaving the station, the train launched off of the Bostian Bridge and fell sixty feet to the Third Creek below. Survivors crawled out of the wreckage and ran back to Statesville to report the accident. People from town ran back to rescue people from the wreck. Twenty-three people died, some from the crash, but others drowned in the creek, unable to escape the water. Thirty more people were injured and it is still one of the worst railroad disasters in the history of North Carolina and ranks in the top twenty in US history.

The derailment of train No. 9 repeats on the anniversary of the crash. The first written report is of a husband and wife that got a flat tire near the bridge in 1941. The husband went back to town to get help. The wife, while waiting for help to arrive, heard a train whistle, then saw the approaching train derail and fall to the creek below. She heard the sounds of the injured people and

was looking down into the creek at the wreckage as her husband and shop keeper from town pulled up. Panicked, she told them what had just happened and they ran to the creek to look. There was nothing there. Unnerved and probably a little miffed that her husband didn't believe her, she insisted that they stop at the train station in Statesville. There she asked the ticket gent if there had

been an accident. The stunned ticket agent listened to her story, then replied that there had been no accident that day, but there had been a very bad one on that day fifty years earlier.

Other reports tell of the metallic screeching of train wheels and the cries of injured people. There are also tales of a ghostly light seen near the tracks and the ghost of a railroad employee with a gold watch.

The legend is well-known locally and attracts visitors to the bridge every August 27th, despite the fact that the Bostian Bridge is still an active train route. On August 27, 2010, about a dozen ghost hunters were gathered on the bridge just before 3:00AM, hoping to witness the ghost train. Indeed, they did hear an approaching train, but realized too late exactly what was happening. In a panic, they had to run 150 feet to get off of the bridge. Christopher Kaiser, age 29, was struck and killed by the train. Before being struck, he pushed his girlfriend off of the tracks, where she



Photos of the Richmond & Danville No. 9 at the base of the Bostian Bridge on August 27, 1891.

fell 30-40 feet and was badly injured. One other person was injured in the accident. Why didn't they run as soon as they heard the train? Well, they were expecting to witness a ghost train that posed no real threat and realized too late that the train was the real deal.

Phantom Train of Medicine Hat¹¹

In June 1908, a Canadian Pacific Railway train left the station in Medicine Hat in Alberta and headed east toward Dunmore. On board were the engineer, Bob Twohey, and the fireman, Gus Day. About two miles into the journey, they entered a blind curve in the track and then found themselves facing the headlight of an oncoming train which sounded its whistle. Twohey, knowing that it was already too late, reached for the brake. And then something very strange happened. The oncoming train moved to the side, where there were no tracks, and passed harmlessly beside them. The crew of the ghostly train waved to Twohey and Day on their way past, as all crew members of the CPR would do. Twohey and Day looked rearward out of the window, but the train had vanished.

Feeling as if they had taken leave of their senses, the two continued their journey in silence and didn't speak about the incident afterward. Day seemed to shrug it off and continued working on the train as always. Twohey, however, regarded it as an omen and consulted a fortune teller that told him he would die within a month. About two weeks later, Twohey and Day happened to meet on a street in Medicine Hat. They finally spoke about the incident and were relieved that they had really seen the same thing. Twohey told Day about the fortune teller's prediction and that he was taking some time off to stay with some relatives. Day continued working.

A few nights after his meeting with Twohey, Day was assigned to the same engine as he was on the night of the strange occurrence, on a very similar route. This time he was joined by J. Nicholson serving as engineer. Just as the rounded the same corner, they were faced with an oncoming train, which sounded its whistle and then moved to the side. The crew waved to Day and Nicholson and then the train disappeared.

Well, that was it for Day. When their train pulled into their destination, he requested yard duty. Nicholson decided to chalk it up to just some weird one-time thing. Twohey, meanwhile, had returned from his time off and had returned to duty. On the morning of July 8, 1908, Nicholson was serving as engineer on the same engine that he had been on with Day. This time the fireman on board was H. Thompson. Their route was the same as before. Again, at the curve, they were faced with an oncoming train. But this time the train was real. It was No. 514 out of Lethbridge and was being operated by Bob Twohey. Both Twohey and Nicholson died on impact. A fireman, a conductor and seven passengers were also killed. Thompson was able to jump from his engine just in time, escaping his own certain death.

In the yard, someone ran toward Day and started shouting about a crash. "There's been a crash! On the line to Dunmore, there's been a crash! They're saying two of our engineers were killed," the man said. Day asked which engineers. "Twohey and Nicholson. They crashed head-on."



Part of the Canadian Pacific Railway track winding around one of the cutbanks in the Ross Creek coulee.

Republic Ghost Train

On the evening of January 10, 1887, a passenger train carrying 65 people was headed east at about 60 miles per hour near the small town of Republic in Seneca County, Ohio. At such a high rate of speed, there was little that the engineer could do when he suddenly saw the stalled freight train on the tracks except jump clear of the train. He watched as the two trains collided, rose into the air and then crashed back down to earth. Soon after the crash, one of the cars caught fire, burning those inside beyond recognition. It could have been worse, but for the quick thinking and bravery of one passenger that was able to escape the burning car and uncouple the sleeping cars, pushing them to safety. In total, between 15 and 22 people lost their lives in the crash.

In a local newspaper article on March 4, 1887, on three occasions, train workers claim to have seen a red danger signal on the tracks, near the scene of the crash. It was a red light carried by a woman in white. Each time, the train would stop, ending up almost on the exact spot of the accident, but both the light and the woman were gone.

Locals to this day say the ghost of the passenger train can be seen barreling down the tracks, past the Farewell Retreat Township Cemetery where the "unknown" victims are buried, on its way to reenact the fateful night of the disaster.



A DAY OF HORRORS.
—
An Awful Railway Disaster
near Tiffin,
—
TWO TRAINS COLLIDE IN
THE DEAD OF NIGHT,
—
Crushing the Coaches Into a
Shapeless Mass, and Burying
the Sleeping Passengers
in the Ruins,
—
WHERE FIRE FINISHED THE FEAR-
FUL WORK OF DESTRUCTION.
—
Sixteen Persons Known to Have been
Killed.
—
About 2:15 o'clock Tuesday morn-
ing, as a Baltimore and Ohio freight
train, eastbound, was pulling up a
grade nine miles east of Tiffin, and
one-half mile west of the village of
Republic, the engine, No. 726, gave
out, so the conductor, W. J. Fletcher,
says. The train could go no further

Left: Four people remained unidentified and unclaimed and were buried together under this headstone on January 19, 1887. Top right: Illustration of the crash from the New York paper Frank Leslie's Illustrated dated week ending January 15, 1887. Bottom right: Part of a newspaper article about the crash in The Marysville Tribune out of Marysville, Ohio, dated January 12, 1887.

Silverpilen

In 1965, Stockholm Metro bought a new Silverpilen C5 engine and eight unpainted aluminum train cars to see how they would perform and if the population would accept them as a replacement for the C4. The C4 series that ran at the time were painted green, but the unpainted aluminum train would be cheaper to produce. The reaction of the public was drastic and almost immediate. They did not like the new train. The train was relegated to backup service during rush hour, but even then, it could be completely empty and no one would board. The people found the train to be creepy and wide spread urban legends surrounded the train as soon as the 1970s. The metro system itself was doing quite well in the 70s and was expanded, including construction of Kymlinge station near an area of the city slated for redevelopment. That redevelopment never happened and the station was never finished. The Silverpilen was used until the mid-1990s and was finally decommissioned.

Legend says the train still runs after nightly train service has stopped, around 3AM. The train is the train of the dead. If the train shows up at a station and is filled with dead passengers, anyone that enters the train will survive and be released. If the train is empty, the train is meant to pick up the person at the station and bring them to the Underworld. Another version says that anyone entering the train will be trapped there forever. The unfinished Kymlinge station along the Blue Line expansion has been associated with the Silverpilen train, even though the Silverpilen very rarely operated on the Blue

Line. Kymlinge station is now rumored to be the “station of the dead” and the base of operations for the Silverpilen.

The real train, or at least part of it, still exists. Half of the train is used at the Stockholm Police Academy and is used to train cadets on how to handle crime on the metro. The only other car known to survive is at the headquarters of the Swedish company that built the train.



Above: The Silverpilen train in Stockholm. Below: Kymlinge station.



Gravity Hills

Where Up is Down

In locations around the world, there are places known as “gravity hills”, where the laws of physics don’t apply and things roll uphill. Most have similar legends attached to them: a tragic accident, a violent death and a spirit’s obsession with preventing another tragedy.

To experience a gravity hill, you pull your car up to a particular place on a certain road, put the car in neutral and take your foot off the brake. The car will move up the hill, as if pushed by some force. Some people will also sprinkle flour or baby powder on the trunk or bumper and have finger and hand prints appear after their spooky ride. So, where are these roads?

One is located at the Ewing Avenue exit off of Route 208 in Franklin Lakes, NJ. After exiting the highway, stop at the stop sign, put the car in neutral, lift your foot off the brake and your car rolls backwards “up” the hill. There are two stories behind the hill here. One says that a little girl ran out into the street after her ball, was killed by a car and now tries to push cars up the hill in the hope of protecting other children. A second story tells of a young woman that was killed at the bottom of the exit ramp and she is pushing you away from the dangerous intersection. Weird NJ tried to take a ride on the hill in Franklin Lakes. For their trouble, the local police fined them \$76 and some points on their license. As with many gravity hills, backing up in the direction of traffic can be dangerous and is generally frowned upon by law enforcement.

In Titusville, NJ if you travel Route 29 to Pleasant Valley Road and take this for about a mile, you will see a small sign on the left shoulder of the road indicating where to stop your car. The legend behind this hill says that a farmer arrived at his house one night to find his house on fire with his family trapped inside. He went for help and found a carriage full of people just watching his house burn. He begged them for help, then went to save his family. Both he and his family perished in the blaze. The man’s spirit, which is sometimes seen signaling with a lantern, pushes your car in an effort to get someone, anyone to help his family.

At a stop sign on New Prospect Road in Jackson, NJ is another gravity hill. The story here revolves around a teenage girl and her father. A stranger came to their door saying his car had broken down and needed a place to stay for the night. In the morning, the girl’s father was missing. The stranger said her father, a trucker, had left on a long truck job and that the father had invited the stranger to stay as long as he needed. The girl, suspicious of the stranger, ran for the door, grabbing her father’s car keys along the way. She made

it to the car, but it stalled just as the stranger approached the car. Just then, the ghost of her father, murdered by the stranger, pushed her and the car out of harm’s way. Another account says that both father and daughter were murdered. The story behind this gravity hill is that the father, or both father and daughter, push cars away from the location where the murders happened. This local legend is so popular that it has inspired a haunted attraction at Cicconi Farms, near the gravity hill location, called Nightmare at Gravity Hill.

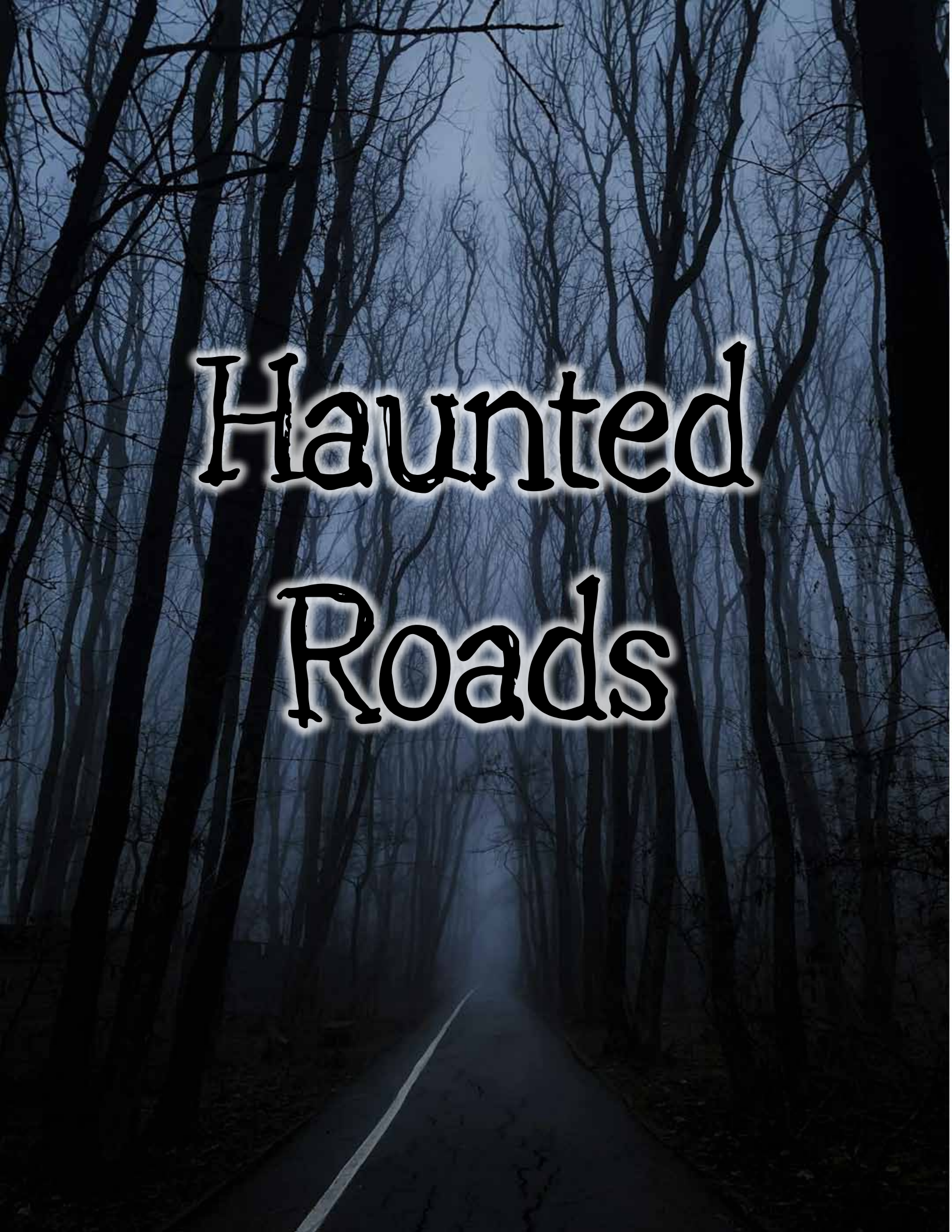
Where Pleasant View Road meets Wyndamere Road in Lewisberry, PA is another scene of an alleged tragedy. Local legend says that a school bus collided with a train at the intersection, killing the children inside. Of course, any research into the story reveals that there has never been train tracks near this intersection. A different legend says a group of teenagers were driving in a car that was struck broadside by a truck, killing them instantly. Again, there is no record of such an accident there. In both stories, the ghosts of the victims move cars away from the intersection.

So, what is the real explanation behind gravity hills? It’s an illusion caused by the landscape around the locations that make it seem like downhill is uphill. A completely or mostly obstructed horizon can combine with other visual cues, like a curve in the road, trees that aren’t growing quite straight and lack of other visual reference points like buildings, to make you think your car is rolling up the hill. A good way to check is to empty a bottle of water onto the road. The water will flow downhill.

And what about reports of finger and hand prints on the rear bumper and trunk? It’s like dusting for fingerprints at a crime. Your fingers and hands leave behind oils when you touch your car. Unless the surface is wiped down, those prints can last for years. When you dust the car with any powder, the powder will stick to the oil residue, revealing the prints not seen before.



A gravity hill at Pleasantview Road in Lewisberry, PA.

A dark, atmospheric photograph of a road winding through a forest of bare trees. The road is dark and has a white line on the left side. The trees are tall and thin, with no leaves, and the air is thick with fog or mist, creating a spooky and mysterious mood. The overall color palette is dark blue and black.

Haunted Roads

Clinton Road

Ghosts, phantom headlights and trucks, a phantom hitchhiker and strange animals have all earned Clinton Road in West Milford, NJ its number one spot as the most haunted road in the US. The lonely stretch of curving road that runs through thick woods can be disconcerting, especially at night. Its reputation is only made worse by the rumors of killers dumping bodies in the woods through which the road travels, with one body actually found dumped in May 1983.

One story told about Clinton Road is that of phantom headlights or a ghostly truck that appears out of nowhere and chases drivers, only to disappear when the road ends. Other stories tell of a young woman hitchhiking by the side of the road. When approached, she vanishes. There are also reports of strange animals along the road, everything from hellhounds and strange hybrids to monkeys. Some people think these may be surviving animals that escaped from a nearby attraction called Jungle Habitat that closed in 1976.

One of the more famous stories surrounding the road is that of a young boy that somehow drowned near one of the bridges over Clinton Brook, near a place called Dead Man's Curve. If you toss a coin into the water below the bridge, the boy's ghost tosses it back to you. Sometimes the boy's ghost is seen or he can be heard whispering. There is more than one bridge on Clinton Road that crosses over Clinton Brook and the location of the ghost boy's bridge is uncertain, but it may be the one several miles north of the old furnace.

Speaking of the old furnace, Clinton Furnace was an iron smelter built in 1826 and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. Legends have erroneously suggested that it was a Druidic temple. As early as 1905, a local writer, J. Percy Crayon said of the woods surrounding the furnace, "It was never advisable to pass through the 'five mile woods' after dark, for... tradition tells us they were infested with bands of robbers, and counterfeiters, to say nothing of the witches that held their nightly dances and carousels at Green Island, and the ghosts that then made their appearance..."

North of the Clinton Furnace, but before what I think may be the ghost boy's bridge, sits the ruins of Cross Castle. Richard J. Cross built the structure in 1905 as a summer home for his family and they called it Bearfort. It looked like something from a fairy tale or a Gothic story. Cross died in 1917 and the family sold the castle to the City of Newark in 1919. A fire destroyed the wooden parts of the castle, leaving just the stone walls. In 1988, the Newark Watershed Commission knocked down what was left, deeming it an attractive nuisance

and dangerously unsound. People that visit the ruins tell of people having seizures, mysterious bruises appearing on people, unexplained cold drafts, disembodied whispering and apparitions.



Top: One of the bridges over Clinton Road. Center: Remains of the old iron smelter.
Bottom: The ruins of Cross Castle.

Highway 666

Route 666, also known as “The Devil’s Highway” or the “Highway to Hell”, is a lonely stretch of road that runs through 200 miles of desert through three states, (New Mexico, Colorado and Utah), from Monticello, Utah to Gallup, New Mexico. Some of the dangers here are very real. If you decide to visit, take extra food and water and have a full tank of gas (or a full battery), as there can be 100 miles before you see another gas (charging) station. Also, don’t make the trip in winter. Some of the road reaches elevations of 9,000 feet with dangers of snow and black ice. Some of the dangers are less explainable and among them are a ghostly sedan, a pack of hell hounds, skin walkers, a ghostly girl, unexplained disappearances and lost time.

As some people traverse Route 666 and the sun begins to set, they report experiencing deep, irrational fear. Once darkness has taken hold, a pair of headlights comes up quickly behind them, tailgating their car. At this point, many drivers pull over to let the other driver pass. Some see a black sedan rush past them, while others look around to find no sign of their pursuer at all.

Other people report a pack of vicious supernatural dogs that can keep pace with a speeding car and shred tires with their teeth. Some report these hounds jumping into the open windows of moving vehicles and mauling the occupants.

Native American legends of the area tell of skin walkers, evil sorcerers that can take the shape of animals. Many say these skin walkers can be encountered today along Route 666, where they shapeshift into animals and run out in front of cars, causing accidents.

A less intimidating spirit is that of a young woman in white standing by the side of the road, looking quite upset. Whenever she is approached, she disappears.

A bit more concerning are the disappearances that are said to take place along the road. In some cases, the abandoned car or some belongings are found, but in other cases, there is no trace left behind. Some people reappear after going missing for a period of time, but they can offer no explanation for their absence and feel as if very little time has passed. Others have the opposite experience and report that their travel down the highway took much, much longer than it should have, but cannot explain the lost time.

In 2003, Route 666 was renamed Route 491. Afterward, there was a drop in accidents and fatalities along the highway, possibly explained by the anxiety once felt by driving down a highway with such an unlucky number.



Resurrection Mary

The classic story of a hitchhiking ghost is common throughout the world, but in the United States, no other ghostly hitchhiker is as famous as Resurrection Mary.

Her story starts at the Oh Henry Ballroom at 8900 Archer Avenue in Willow Springs, Illinois. According to the story, Mary and her friends often visited the Oh Henry Ballroom and sometime in the late 1920s or early 1930s, Mary was there with a boyfriend when they had a fight and she stormed out, walking in the rain along Archer Avenue. She didn't get far before she was hit and killed by a car. Since then, people travelling along Archer Avenue at night between the location of the ballroom and Resurrection Cemetery have encountered a young woman, in her twenties, described as blonde with blue eyes and wearing a white party dress. Sometimes she is also encountered at one of the local dance halls.

Jerry Palus was the first person to report an encounter with Mary in 1939. He met her at a dance hall on the Southside, where they spent the night dancing. But Jerry felt that something was not right. Mary's hands were cold as ice. At closing time, Jerry offered Mary a ride home, but she instead asked to be taken to Archer Avenue, not to where she said she lived. Jerry did as he was asked. When they got to Resurrection Cemetery, Mary told Jerry to stop the car. She got out of the car and vanished. The next day, Jerry went to where Mary had said she lived. The door was

answered by an older woman and Jerry said he was looking for Mary. The woman said no one named Mary lived there, but Jerry saw a picture of Mary in the house. When he pointed out the picture, the woman said that wasn't possible. The person in the picture, her daughter, had died years ago.

This story is typical of the other stories about Resurrection Mary. Mary is either encountered at a dance hall or hitchhiking along Archer Avenue, asks for a ride, then disappears as the car approaches the cemetery. It's thought that Mary is Buried there.

Who exactly Mary is a matter of debate. One popular theory is that she is Ona Marjira "Anna" Norkus who died in a car crash in 1927, supposedly on her way home from the Oh Henry Ballroom. There are a couple of things wrong with this theory. First, Ona was only twelve when she died. Also, the crash that killed Ona was not on Archer Avenue. Her burial is not in Resurrection Cemetery. And I can't find any documentation that says the car she was in was coming from the Oh Henry Ballroom. Another possibility is that the ghost is that of Marie Bregovy, who died in a car accident in 1934 at the age of 21. However, Bregovy was a brunette and her accident was also not on Archer Avenue. Bergovy might lie within Resurrection Cemetery, but there is no headstone for her. Family members say she was buried in a temporary grave there and never given a permanent burial.



Resurrection Cemetery.

Villamain & Shane Roads

Just outside of San Antonio, Texas is the junction of Villamain and Shane Roads, crossing the tracks for the Union Pacific Railroad. Here you will find a gravity hill and reports of ghosts haunting the road. Nearby you may find rosaries, flowers and toys left for the children that are said to haunt the intersection.

There are two stories connected to the intersection. One has a school bus in the 1930s or 1940s that stalled on the tracks on the way home from school. The driver saw the approaching train and attempted to get the children off the bus, but the driver and ten of the children were killed.

The other story, also in the late 1930s or early 1940s, tells of a nun driving a school bus at night after a field trip. The bus stalled on the tracks and the nun tried to restart the bus as the children slept. A train, with a burned-out headlight, appeared and gave no time to get the children to safety. The nun continued to try to get the bus started. The train struck the bus, tearing it in half and sending the nun through the windshield, surviving the accident. The ten children on the bus were not as lucky and all died in the wreck. Weeks later, wracked by guilt, the nun returned to the site of the tragedy, ready to end her own life. She parked her car on the tracks and waited for the train. But as the train sped toward her, she heard the children's voices and the car was pushed off of the tracks and clear of the train. After the train passed, she got out of the car, but didn't see the person that had saved her. Instead, on the back of her car were ten pairs of small handprints.

Locals claim they sometimes hear the screech of train brakes where the accident happened, but there's no train in sight. One woman driving on Shane Road at night saw a little girl at the railroad crossing.

Concerned, she offered the girl a ride home, but when they reached the girl's house, she vanished, leaving behind just a fastened seatbelt.

A girl and her friends visited the intersection at night and took some photos, which she e-mailed to her mother. When her mother saw the photos, she was shocked to see the ghost of a little girl holding a teddy bear.

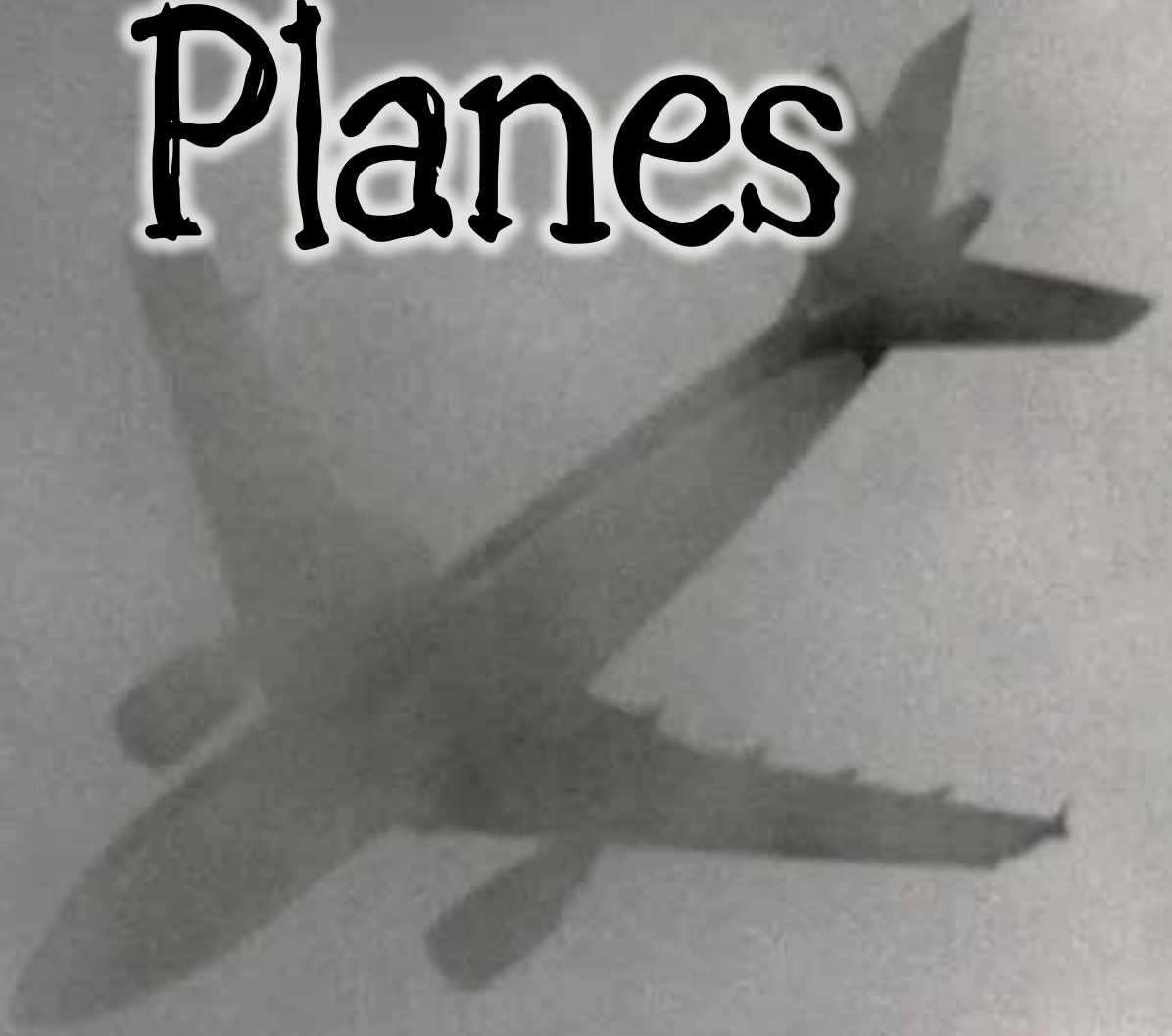
There is a problem with the story, though. No such accident between a school bus and a train ever happened, at least not in Texas. There was a fatal accident on December 1, 1938 in Salt Lake City, Utah. In a blizzard, a school bus with twenty students was on the way home from school when the bus stalled on the tracks just as a fifty-car freight train was headed toward them. Everyone on the bus was killed, 26 children and the driver. It is still the worst grade crossing accident in US history. It appeared on just about every front page in the country and San Antonio was subjected to about ten days of news coverage about the crash. Over time, the memory of the crash in Utah merged with stories of the gravity hill in San Antonio.

Sadly, there is no longer a gravity hill at the intersection. In 2018, a crossing upgrade and the addition of a passing siding changed the characteristics of the intersection and cars no longer roll "uphill".



Photo taken of the ghost girl. Inset is an enhanced image.

Cursed Planes



Eastern Air Lines Flight 401

22

On December 29, 1972, Eastern Air Lines Flight 401 left John F. Kennedy International Airport bound for Miami International Airport. The Lockheed L-1011 TriStar plane was commanded by Captain Robert Albin "Bob" Loft. The two other members of the flight crew were First Officer Albert John "Bert" Stockstill and Flight Engineer Donald Louis "Don" Repo. Technical Officer Angelo Donadeo was also aboard, but as a "nonrevenue passenger" returning to Miami from an assignment in New York City. Altogether, there were 163 passengers and 13 crew members.

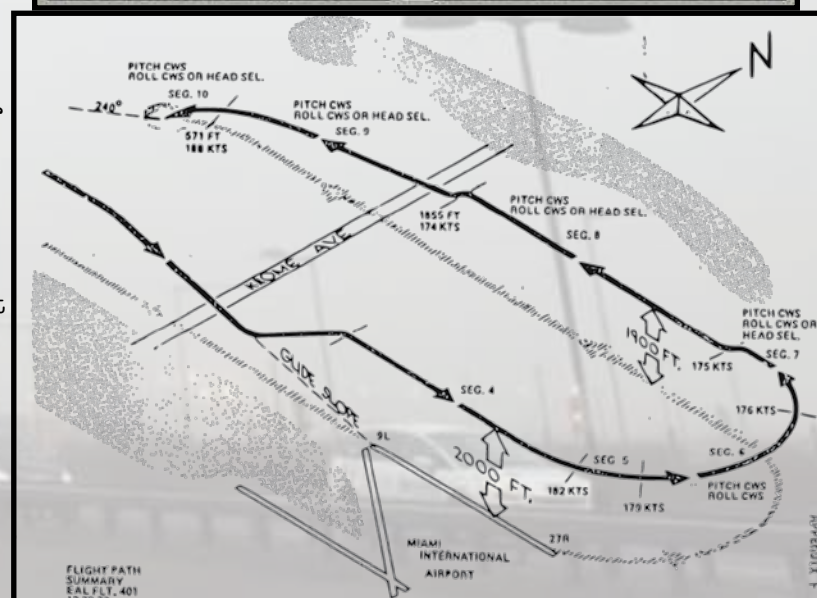
Nothing was amiss until 11:32PM as the plane began its approach to Miami. Stockstill lowered the landing gear, but noticed that the landing gear indicator did not light to confirm the deployment of the landing gear. The crew cycled the landing gear, but the indicator still did not light. Loft informed the tower that they were discontinuing their approach and asked to enter a holding pattern. The approach controller instructed the crew to climb to 2,000 feet and hold west above the Everglades. The flight crew removed the light assembly and Repo went to the avionics bay below the flight deck to visually check that the landing gear was down. At some point, Repo was joined by Donadeo. Fifty seconds after the plane reached 2,000 feet, Loft instructed Stockstill to put the aircraft on autopilot. At some point, Captain Loft bumped the yoke and accidentally disengaged the autopilot. The aircraft maintained altitude for the next eighty seconds, then dropped 100 feet, flew level for another two minutes, then began a descent so gradual that no one noticed. At night, over the darkened Everglades, there would have been no visual clues that they were losing altitude. In the following 70 seconds, the airplane descended only 250 feet, but this triggered an altitude warning chime under Repo's station, but with Repo below and the crew working on the problem, there's no indication anyone heard the chime. In another 50 seconds, the plane had descended to only 1,000 feet. Stockstill only noticed the drop in altitude as he started another turn. The cockpit recorder logged a very brief conversation between Stockstill and Loft concerning their altitude and ten seconds later Flight 401 crashed into the Everglades at 227 miles per hour with the plane in mid-turn. The left wingtip hit first, followed by the left engine and the left landing gear. When the main fuselage hit, it continued to move through the ground surface, breaking up as it travelled, leaving wreckage over an area 1600 feet long and 330 feet wide.

Stockstill was killed on impact, Loft died on the flight deck before he could be rescued, Repo later died in a hospital. Of the occupants of the flight deck, only Donadeo survived. Of the 10 flight attendants, only two survived and only 67 of the 163 passengers survived. Of the survivors, 58 were seriously injured. At the time, it was the second-deadliest airplane crash in US history. It was later determined that the initial problem that led to the crash (the indicator light) was caused by a burnt-out bulb.

After the crash, stories began to circulate that the ghosts of Loft and Repo were seen on other Eastern Air Lines L-1011 TriStars. On one flight, the captain was

asked to check on a passenger wearing a pilot's uniform. The passenger seemed dazed and unresponsive, but the captain recognized him as Bob Loft. On another flight, Don Repo was seen by the flight crew and warned them about a faulty electrical circuit, which they replaced. Loft was also seen more than once doing pre-flight checks and telling the ground crew that they were completed. All of the sightings occurred on planes that were reportedly using parts that had been salvaged from Flight 401. Eastern Air Lines publicly denied the reports of the hauntings, but they quietly removed the parts that had come from Flight 401 and the reports stopped.

An original floor board from Flight 401 remains in the archives at History Miami in South Florida. Pieces of the plane's wreckage can also be found in Ed and Lorraine Warren's Occult Museum in Monroe, Connecticut.



Above: Photos of Flight Engineer Donald Louis "Don" Repo and Captain Robert Albin "Bob" Loft.

Below: The flight path of Flight 401.

The Disappearance of Flight 19²³

The disappearances of Flight 19 and the PBM Mariner that attempted a rescue are quite possibly the most famous disappearances of the Bermuda Triangle. To this day, no one is 100% sure of just what happened and none of the planes or the crews have been found.

Flight 19 was a group of TBF Avenger torpedo bombers that left Naval Air Station Fort Lauderdale on the afternoon of December 5, 1945 on a routine navigation and combat training exercise known as "Navigation problem No. 1". They were to fly east from the Florida coast, perform bombing runs at Hens and Chicks Shoals, turn north, pass over Grand Bahama Island and then fly back to NAS Fort Lauderdale. There were a few scattered showers that day and visibility and wind speeds were normal. The flight was led by Lt. Charles C. Taylor, a pilot with about 2,500 flying hours and multiple WWII combat tours in the Pacific.

One of the things they would practice that day was "dead reckoning" or calculating where you are using elapsed time, compasses and looking out the window at the land beneath you. During pre-flight checks it was discovered that none of the Avengers had a clock onboard, but it was assumed that all the pilots had a watch. To further complicate matters, the area around Florida has a lot of little islands that look a lot alike.

The beginning of the exercise went just as planned. AT about 15:00, the last pilot requested permission to drop his last bomb. The trouble began at about 15:45, during the second leg of the flight, when the flight tower at Fort Lauderdale received a message from Taylor, who sounded anxious.

"Cannot see land," Taylor said. "We seem to be off course."
"What is your position," the tower responded.

Then there were a few moments of silence. Tower personnel peered out into the clear day in the direction where the planes were supposed to be operating, but there was no sign of them.

"We cannot be sure where we are," the flight leader announced. "Repeat: Cannot see land."

At about the same time, Lt. Robert F. Cox, forming up his own group to fly the same exercise, received a transmission from Taylor. Taylor stated that both of his compasses were not functioning and that he was attempting to find Fort Lauderdale. He saw some broken land beneath him and thought he was over the Florida Keys. We now know that he was actually over the Bahamas, but how he made the error of almost 200 miles and why he stuck to this belief despite contrary evidence is unknown.

At 16:45, Taylor radioed that he was going to head 30 degrees (north-northeast) for 45 minutes, then head north. The tower could not tell where he was and his IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) could not be picked up. The tower requested that Taylor broadcast on 4805 kHz, but this transmission was not acknowledged. The tower then requested that he transmit on 3000 kHz, the search and rescue frequency, but Taylor refused, as switching frequencies would put him out of contact with his other

pilots. At about 17:00, Taylor radioed to his fellow pilots to change course to 90 degrees (east) for 10 minutes. Around this time, someone in the flight said, "Dammit, if we could just fly west we would get home; head west, dammit." Why the students didn't simply break formation and head west on their own has been attributed to military discipline.

By 17:50, several radio stations had triangulated Flight 19's position as north of the Bahamas. Knowing that the planes' fuel would run out at about 20:00, at around 18:00 a search and rescue effort was launched with a Consolidated PBY Catalina sent to search for Flight 19 and lead them back. At 18:04, Taylor radioed his fellow pilots, "Holding 270 (west). We didn't fly far enough east; we may as well just turn around and fly east again". By that time the weather was worsening and it was getting dark. At about 18:20, Taylor sent his last message. "All planes close up tight ... we'll have to ditch unless landfall ... when the first plane drops below 10 gallons, we all go down together."

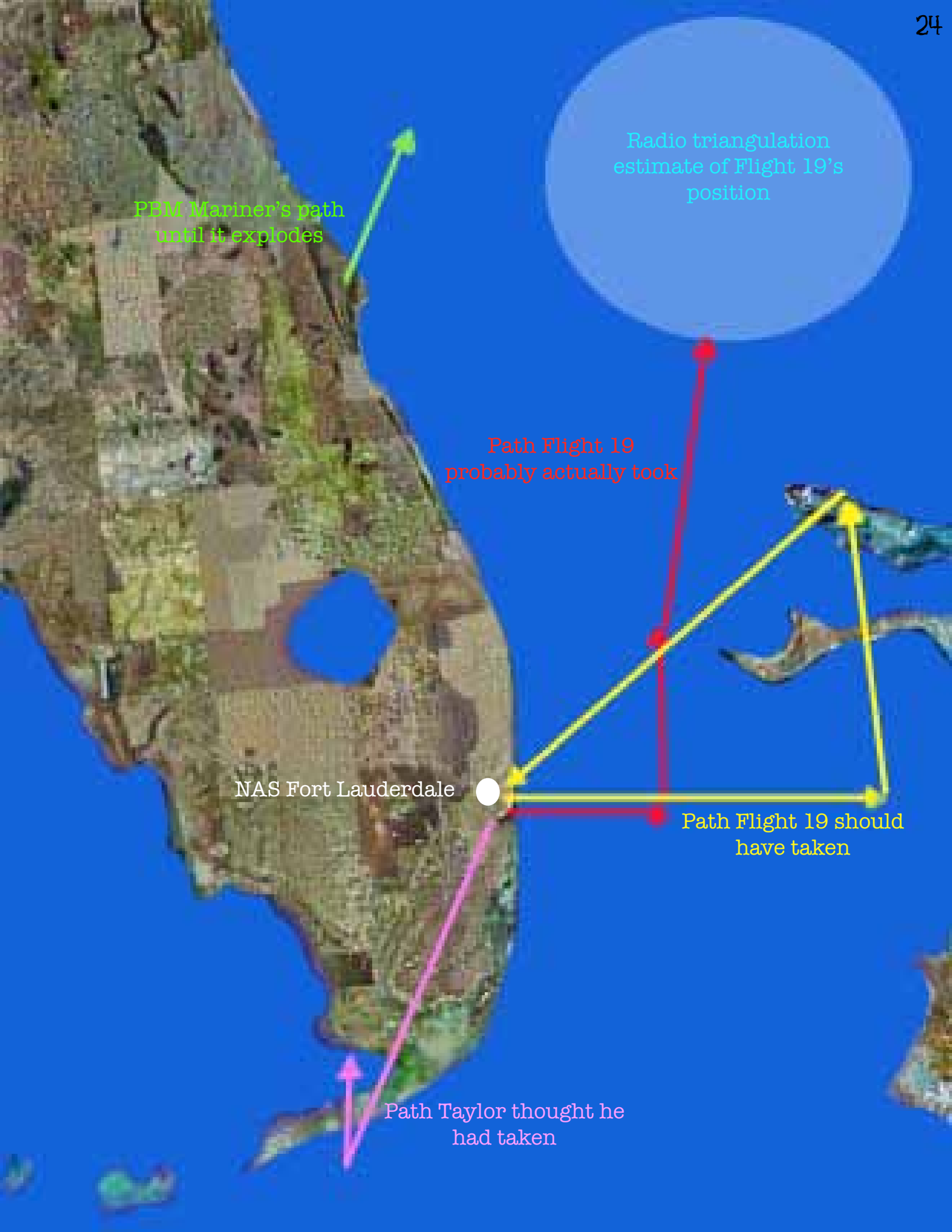
At 19:27, two Martin PBM Mariner flying boats were sent to perform a square pattern search for Flight 19 and took off from Naval Air Station Banana River. One of the Mariners called in a routine radio message at 19:30 and then it too disappeared from radar 17 minutes later, taking with it 13 crewmen. This disappearance can be more easily explained. The Mariner had flexible fuel lines that could come loose in rough weather and leak gasoline. At 21:15, the tanker SS Gaines Mill reported finding an oil slick and flames. It can safely be assumed that the Mariner suffered a mid-flight explosion.

At daybreak, a larger rescue effort was launched. The search lasted for five days and covered 300,000 square miles of the Gulf and the Atlantic. Nothing was found. The 14 crewmen of Flight 19 and the 13 crewmen of the Mariner were never found. A Navy report concluded that flight leader Lt. Taylor misidentified the land beneath him, resulting in the flight heading out over open water and running out of fuel. The report was later changed to "cause unknown" after Taylor's mother took issue with blaming her son when none of the airplanes had been found to provide any evidence.

In 1986, Avenger wreckage was found off the Florida coast during the search for the Space Shuttle Challenger. The Avenger wreckage was raised in 1990, but it was not from Flight 19. In 1991, treasure hunter Graham Hawkes discovered the wreckage of five Avengers, but the tail numbers did not match any planes from Flight 19. To date, no remains from the five Avengers or the Mariner have ever been found.



TBF Avengers in flight over Norfolk, VA on Sept. 1, 1942. These planes are very similar to the planes in Flight 19.



Radio triangulation
estimate of Flight 19's
position

PBM Mariner's path
until it explodes

Path Flight 19
probably actually took

NAS Fort Lauderdale

Path Flight 19 should
have taken

Path Taylor thought he
had taken

Happy Halloween!

I hope you enjoyed these tales. This is by no means an exhaustive exploration. Among the topics not covered here:

The 1961 Lincoln convertible in which President John F. Kennedy was assassinated now resides at the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation and is said to be haunted by the apparition of Kennedy himself, dressed in a gray suit, especially around late November.

The funeral train of President Abraham Lincoln is said to still run the route it took in April 1865. People report not only hearing the train pass by, but also seeing it, sometimes complete with skeletal soldiers keeping watch over the casket.

A ghostly black car circles around Rose Hill Cemetery in Chicago, Illinois, possibly conveying the ghost of a former caretaker that is still watching over the place.

England is haunted by the phantom Derbyshire Douglas Dakota airplane, the ghost of a World War II plane that crashed in the area in the 1940s.

London is haunted by a phantom bus known simply as Number 7. It appears in the dead of night at a specific intersection and has been blamed for traffic accidents and at least one fatality.

Across the country are places known as "Cry Baby Bridge". They are haunted by a baby and/or the baby's mother and usually involve some tragic death. It seems that almost every state in the union has a similar story.

Spooky roads criss-cross the entire United States and other countries as well. I've covered some of them in other issues, including Bray Road in Wisconsin. Route 2A in Haynesville, Maine is haunted by a ghostly bride and the ghosts of two little girls and is so famously dangerous that Dick Curless sang a song about it named "A Tombstone Every Mile". There's even a road in Warren County, New Jersey named Shades of Death Road. The road was either named because of the outbreaks of fatal malaria in the area in the 1800s or the series of murders that happened there in the 1920s and 1930s. Local legends tell of vicious wild cats, apparitions, strange orbs, a haunted stable and a spectral deer that may be the ghost of a Native American guide.

There are plenty more stories. I encourage you to seek them out. Or take a road trip to visit some of the places. Just don't blame me for whatever you may find.