

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: TRIPPING HAZARDS: UNDERSTANDING
AND ADDRESSING RISKS TO HISTORIC
PLACES POSED BY LEGEND TRIPPERS

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Historic places that serve as the setting for legends that claim the potential for extraordinary experiences can be impacted by visitors who seek to have similar experiences for themselves. This practice, known as legend tripping, is a recreational activity in which the visitors, known as legend trippers, engage in certain actions and rituals at the site in order to reenact the legend and stimulate the uncanny or supernatural events that others claim to have experienced. While the specific performances required by the legend are often benign, legend trippers sometimes engage in other activities and behaviors that may ultimately be harmful to the site.

I employ a Critical Topic Approach to explore the fundamental elements of legend tripping as associated with historic places through analysis of four example locations. I explore how stories,

specifically legends, can create sense of place and place attachment which, accompanied by the purported potential to experience the extraordinary, motivate some people to visit a site to see if they have a similar experience. I discuss how, once at the site, legend trippers endeavor to enter into the legend themselves by performing certain actions that are said to illicit the uncanny response and how these actions, and others in which legend trippers engage, such as “tagging,” littering, and other actions that harm site structures and buildings, have the potential for real, and in some cases lasting, damage. I examine the potential effects of legend tripping and how some sites attempt to address them.

Using an interdisciplinary approach, combining folklore, historic preservation, and cultural geography theories and practices, I show in this thesis that stewards of historic places experiencing impacts from legend trippers can benefit from understanding the motivations and intentions behind the practice and use this understanding to develop a pragmatic plan for management and mitigation of such impacts. I offer analysis of common legend trip consequences and mitigation approaches, followed by suggestions and recommendations for additional potential strategies to address legend trip impacts. I also discuss how it may be possible to find ways to leverage the legend tripping in a way that may ultimately benefit the historic place.

Subject Headings: Legend tripping, folklore, legends, place, ostension, legend transmission, Jericho Covered Bridge, Black Aggie, Poe Toaster, Hatch’s Camp, St. Anne’s Retreat, place attachment, sense of place, sense of place through story, preservation impacts from legend tripping.

TRIPPING HAZARDS:
UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING RISKS TO HISTORIC PLACES
POSED BY LEGEND TRIPPERS

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This Thesis is submitted to the faculty of Goucher College in partial
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For Peter, who has supported me every step of the way.

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CHAPTER I: LEGEND TRIPS TO HISTORIC PLACES

The Trouble with Legend Tripping

Legends with strong place associations can inspire people through story to travel to such sites in search of a firsthand experience. People who visit these sites, who are known as legend trippers, do so for the purpose of performing or acting out certain legend rituals and engaging in “spiritual” activities in the hopes of recreating or experiencing extraordinary or supernatural elements of the story. Often however, in addition to performing the legend rituals, these visitors also engage in other recreational, reckless, and illicit activities. Although participants may consider their actions as simply an entertaining diversion, a means of testing reality, a way to meet social challenges, or rebellion against adult rules, legend tripping can have real consequences for historic places. As such, it is critical that custodians and stewards of historic places be aware when their site is a destination for legend trippers and be able to accurately evaluate and employ strategies to mitigate potentially deleterious and destructive impacts.

There is a long tradition of adolescents and young adults testing reality and pushing boundaries through participation in legend tripping excursions. In the company of their peers and away from parents and other authority figures, legend trippers may travel to historic, and sometimes off-limits, places to re-enact legend elements hoping to recreate supernatural or extraordinary events. Although not all legend trip destinations are old places, the strong association between the potential for the supernatural and places that look old and mysterious make historic places a common target.

As humans, we often feel a need to make our presence known at the places we visit that hold meaning for us. Numerous roadside memorials, love lock bridges and other places where we feel compelled to leave our mark attest to this desire.¹ However, sometimes leaving a token or mark of our visit can be problematic, especially when it impacts places that are important to others, particularly if they hold importance for different reasons.

Take, as an example, the burial site of Harris Glenn Milstead, also known as Divine, who starred in several movies directed by filmmaker John Waters. Divine's flamboyant persona earned him a legion of dedicated fans who, despite the fact that Divine died in 1988, still visit his grave to pay tribute and leave a mark commemorating their visit (see fig. 1). Numerous photographs available on-line provide evidence of recurring visits and the visible changes to the site as each round of markings and offerings is cleared away and a new round of impacts occurs.² Unfortunately, the marks and tokens left by visitors at his burial site effectively alter a place of remembrance for the family of Divine, which they may consider disrespectful and irreverent. The dynamic between the two groups who consider Divine's grave an important place mirrors the distinction between two competing identities: Milstead, whom family visit and Divine, whom fans visit.

¹ A Google search for "love lock bridge" returns results for similar phenomena involving bridges around the globe. Love lock refers to the practice of affixing a padlock to the railing of a bridge (often the keyed variety rather than combination locks) and tossing the key into the water below, to symbolize the enduring bond between lovers. Atlas Obscura presently displays articles for eleven love lock bridges: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/categories/love-locks>. Although an endearing tradition, the weight of tens of thousands of locks in some of these locations has led to grave concerns about structural stability of the bridges and other potential impacts. <https://www.contiki.com/six-two/truth-love-lock-bridges/>

² On impacts to Milstead's headstone, see Suzanne Loudermilk, "Divine, in Death as in Life Forget the Makeup and Fierce Dresses. Harris Glenn Milstead Was a Talented Star Who Was Loved by Many; Baltimore ... or Less," *The Sun*, October 15, 2000, sec. Arts & Society; Ed Gunts, "Divine's Gravestone Gets a Restoration and Cemetery Warns Fans: 'Please Be Respectful' of Others," Baltimore Fishbowl, August 20, 2021, <https://baltimorefishbowl.com/stories/divines-gravestone-gets-a-restoration-and-cemetery-warns-fans-please-be-respectful-of-others/>; Ed Gunts, "Divine's Gravestone Has Been Vandalized Again," Baltimore Fishbowl, October 19, 2021, <https://baltimorefishbowl.com/stories/divines-gravestone-has-been-vandalized-again/>.



Figure 1. Admirers continue to leave marks, tokens and offerings at the headstone of Harris Glenn Milstead, also known as Divine, in Prospect Hill Cemetery, Towson, Maryland. A sign posted by cemetery staff requests respectful behavior. [Amy Weber; October 28, 2021]

Although the impacts to Divine's headstone reflect legend tripping in a different context from what I explore in this study, they do provide a compelling introduction to the diverse ways in which different people may engage with a place. Visitors to Divine's grave come in a transitory recreational way, and act in furtherance of their own interests and intentions, which may ultimately cause damage and, in some cases, grief for others who have more traditional associations with the site. Similar to the activities evident at Divine's grave, the ways in which legend trippers engage with historic places can have consequences for people who value such places for other reasons.

As I will explore in this thesis treatise, people form strong connections with places for a variety of reasons. Some places are important to us because they are where we experience our everyday lives. Some are important based on their role in our family or culture. Still other places are important

because of an association with a person or an event meaningful in our history. But places can be important to different people for different reasons and, on occasion, the way some people interact with a place can be at odds with how others believe a site should be treated.

Though the impacts to historic places as a result of legend tripping can vary in terms of severity, frequency, and type, there is value to owners and stewards of legend tripping destinations in recognizing when impacts to their site may have origins in story and curiosity rather than random vandalism. Unlike random acts, the impacts of legend tripping are the result of visitors engaging with a site with the hope of inciting or provoking an extraordinary event, one that, were it to occur, could alter the participant's world view. Understanding the motivation behind the visits allows for a more discerning evaluation of potential risks and benefits available to stewards of the impacted historic place. It also creates an opportunity to identify potential mitigation strategies, to the extent they are in line with the resources available.

Key Terms and Concepts

Several of the terms and concepts that are key to this study can be used interchangeably, may have different meanings in different fields of study, or have a more specific application in this thesis. I have selected key terms and concepts used throughout this treatise and define them here as they refer to specific ideas in the context of this study. Some of the terms below are addressed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, as are some other terms critical to this study. Clarification of the intended meaning of these terms in advance will aid in framing a clear and cohesive argument.

Historic Place

In the context of this treatise, I use the term "historic place" broadly to encompass many different types of historic resources. Included are buildings, structures (such as bridges), monuments, and cultural landscape features. Historic place refers to a resource that meets the criteria for

listing as historic in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), though it is important to note that not all places that meet the criteria are officially included. It is also important to note that the focus of this project is not limited to places that are officially designated as historic at the national or local level.³ Of equal concern and at equal, or arguably greater, risk are those places that are eligible for designation but not yet listed, and places eligible under one or more of the designation criteria but whose period of significance is less than fifty years.⁴ In order to qualify for certain grants and other incentive programs, historic places must often be listed in the NRHP or be eligible to be listed in the NRHP. Those that are not yet listed or not yet technically eligible to be generally do not have access to these incentives until they are.

Place-based Legend

In Chapter II, I will discuss place-based legends as those legends associated with a specific place – such as a particular, identifiable bridge, building, or landscape feature. I chose the term place-based over site-based intentionally to capture the inherent meaningfulness ascribed by the word “place.” As will be discussed later in this chapter, place is an important concept in the practice of historic preservation and captures the value that people ascribe to a location. It should be noted that a place-based legend, while initially specific, can in time be associated with several similar places.

³ U.S. National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, vol. 15 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990).

⁴ In order to be eligible for designation on the National Register, and by extension most other local historic registries, a place or other cultural resources must have achieved its significance more than fifty years ago. Criteria Consideration G: Properties that have Achieved Significance Within the Past 50 Years provides an exception to the fifty year standard for “exceptionally important” places and places associated with “exceptionally important” people or events. See: U.S. National Park Service, 15:42–43.

An example of this would be the Bunny Man legend, which originated in Virginia then spread, or migrated, to similar locations in Maryland.⁵

Legend Trip⁶

For the purpose of initial discussion, a legend trip involves traveling to a location associated with a legend claiming that uncanny or supernatural events occur there and engaging in the rituals or performances outlined in the associated story in order to have a similar experience. While there are many types of legends, legend tripping requires a legend with the element of possibility for the unknown or unproven to manifest; the potential to experience the supernatural or uncanny. Although legend trip destinations are often historic places, that isn't true in all cases. Urban legends, for example, can be tied to more modern or contemporary buildings. This study focuses specifically on the impacts of legend tripping on historic places.

Perform or Performance

Performance is a key element of legend tripping. In the performance participants undertake actions or utterances identified in the legend, often in a particular order, that are alleged to stimulate or provoke the supernatural or uncanny facet of the legend. Without the performance element of the legend trip, people can only visit a site and hope through trial and error to discover how to trigger the desired effects. Legend performances can include a combination of leaving of mementos (such as coins, candles, and trinkets), sitting or standing in a certain place, recital of certain phrases, or engaging in specific actions like honking a car horn or flashing headlights. Visiting a legend trip

⁵ Trevor J. Blank and David J. Puglia, *Maryland Legends: Folklore Form the Old Line State* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014).

⁶ The term legend trip, sometimes known as legend quest, is occasionally hyphenated, as in "legend-trip." In this treatise I will use "legend trip" unless directly quoting an author who uses one of the preceding terms.

destination at a certain time of night or night of the year can also be part of the performance. The performance aspect of legend tripping is known as ostension, which I will explore in greater detail in Chapter III. Legend performance is also sometimes referred to as “ritual” in legend trip scholarship. The term ritual is commonly considered in the context of sacred or religious ceremonies; in legend tripping it is intended in a social or cultural context rather than a religious one.

Site Steward

Responsibility for maintenance and upkeep of a historic place can take many forms and rest with a variety of individuals and entities. I use the term site steward, or sometimes steward, in this treatise to refer to those who acquire, through ownership, employment, assignment, or delegation, responsibility for maintaining a historic place. In this context, site stewards are those responsible for maintaining materials, making needed repairs, and in many cases hold responsibility for the day to day operations of the historic place, as applicable. They may or may not be involved in financial, programmatic or operational decision making for the site, but that often depends on the ownership structure.

Ownership Structure

The term ownership structure as used herein refers to the myriad relationships between parties that comprise the arrangements within which a historic place may be owned, operated and maintained. While some properties are owned by private individuals, others may be owned by for-profit or not-for profit entities or government agencies, departments, or trusts. Historic places may also be located on land owned by a federal or state government and leased to an eligible person or entity. In some cases, the land is owned by a government entity but the improvements, or structures built on the land, are owned by someone else. The relevance of ownership structures is that they can vary

greatly among similar property types and the identity, function, and resources of the involved entities all contribute to the resources and opportunities available to a site.

Tourism

It is easy to conflate tourism and legend tripping. Both involve visiting a site for the purpose of engaging in a new experience. However, legend tripping differs from tourism in that, by and large, the legend tripping is unauthorized and unstructured. In tourism, even so-called “dark-” or “ghost-tourism,” which cater to a similar aspect of the tragic or extraordinary, often the narratives are pre-established, and site stewards or their representatives manage the flow of people and access to certain areas. Further, in addition to the potential to experience the extraordinary, the other key facet of legend tripping is the element of performance of certain actions by the legend trippers, as opposed to the representation of actions often displayed at many traditional tourism sites.

Digital Media

Within the context of this project the term digital media refers to a wide array of electronic communications, platforms and tools. Over the last few decades, the emergence of electronic mail, social media platforms, websites, blogs and other means of electronic information sharing have dramatically expanded the audiences with whom information and stories can be shared. Access to and use of digital platforms and tools has fueled the dissemination of information globally and, largely, once information is posted on public networks, it remains there in some form or another. Legends and legend tripping sites are among the information shared in this way, making legends previously known only locally available to a wider audience.⁷

⁷ Lynne S. McNeill and Elizabeth Tucker, “Introduction,” in *Legend Tripping: A Contemporary Legend Casebook* (University Press of Colorado, 2018), 3–30.

Research Methods and Prominent Scholars

My initial research into this subject identified a gap in the legend trip scholarship related to specific physical impacts to historic places at the hands of legend trippers. Most of the studies center on the people and the practices, with little comment on place aside from incidental references to the effects of legend tripper behavior. My intent with this study is to analyze how legend trippers are motivated by story to visit a historic place, the activities in which they engage once at the site, and the real potential consequences for such sites that result, then offering recommendations on how site stewards can consider and address the impacts. In addition to identifying locations visited by legend trippers, I considered type of property, ownership-stewardship arrangements, historic designation status, and other factors in order to demonstrate the diversity of sites where legend tripping occurs. As described below, I applied a combination of approaches in my analysis.

Research Methods

In order provide appropriate and robust evidence supporting my claim that legend tripping often impacts historic places, and to understand the reality of managing such impacts, it is crucial to explore several examples of real historic places that are legend trip destinations. My analysis follows the Critical Topic approach for which I ultimately selected four primary sites with a history of legend tripping activity to illuminate my assertions: the “Black Aggie” grave marker, Hatch’s Camp, Jericho Covered Bridge, and the gravesite of Edgar Allan Poe. I originally identified three sites to explore for this study. I based my initial selections on two primary considerations: sites I personally knew to be legend trip destinations and sites that I could physically visit. One of the original sites I identified, St. Mary’s College in Ellicott City, Maryland, is important as an example of a legend trip site that experienced issues beyond material impacts. The site is posted private property with no trespassing al-

lowed, however, and, despite my best efforts, I was not able to establish contact with any one officially or legally related to that location from whom to gather information for the study or secure permission to access the site. Fortunately, I learned of Hatch's Camp/St. Anne's Retreat in Utah which has a similar legend background and has experienced similar impacts beyond the material that support some of the arguments in this thesis. Although I could not visit Hatch's Camp in person within the limited timeframe for this project, I was able to contact one of the site owners who graciously agreed to answer my questions and that, in addition to an ample collection of information online about the site, convinced me to include one site that I could not personally access.

As I progressed in my research, I discovered that Jericho Covered Bridge, in Kingsville, Maryland, is the subject of several legends claiming that supernatural events occur there. My initial plan was to include that site as an example of a historic place comprising the necessary elements to indicate the potential for legend trips to the site. However, I quickly learned that, in fact, the site has been a legend trip destination for many years and so I decided to include it as a fourth illuminator because it provided yet another historic place stewardship arrangement to examine.

Reflective of the variety of ownership and caretaking arrangements found at historic places, which I will discuss later in this study, I connected with a variety of stewards at the illuminator sites. In the case of the Black Aggie statue and Poe monument, at Druid Ridge Cemetery and Westminster Cemetery respectively, I first contacted the site offices directly, explained my project, and requested to be put in touch with someone at the site who would be willing to speak with me. In the case of Druid Ridge, I was directed to the cemetery General Manager, Mike Bennet, with whom I connected by phone. Bennet talked to me for some time about his experiences at the site and his understanding of events that occurred before his time there. In the case of the Poe monument, Westminster Hall staff quickly put me in contact with Jeff Jerome, colloquially known as "the Poe Guy," who agreed

to meet me at the site, answer my questions and give me a tour of the site. I obtained contact information for the Jericho Covered Bridge from a Maryland Department of Natural Resources historian I spoke with while conducting initial research on the St. Mary's College site. He directed me to the president of the caretaking group responsible for the bridge, Rick Decker, who agreed to meet me at the site, answer my questions and provide other relevant background information. At Hatch's Camp, although I was finally able to identify the owner of the buildings and structures at the site, they did not respond to my attempts to contact them.⁸ I was able to connect with the U.S. Forest Service Ranger responsible for the district where the site is located, however. She put me in contact with historic preservation staff at the U.S. Department of Agriculture who provided me detailed written responses to my questions about the site and the legend trip impacts that occur there.⁹

For each site, I analyzed the same elements: location and ownership structure, the legends and associated legend tripping activity, and what means, if any, have been implemented to mitigate the impacts. Although I was not able to personally visit all of the illuminator sites, I was able to connect with site stewards at all locations in a meaningful way that allowed me to gather information pertinent to my study. I supplemented information from site stewards with information about the sites discussed online and in other media. I used a combination of methods to gather information for this study. In addition to literature reviews and conversations with site stewards, I spoke with state preservation offices, preservation advocacy groups, natural resources personnel, and historians. I also reviewed websites, postings on social media platforms, and books for connections to legends and legend tripping around the example sites.

⁸ As will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis, the land at Hatch's Camp is owned by the U.S. Forest Service but the improvements to the land (i.e., the buildings and structures) are the property of a separate owner.

⁹ The U.S. Forest Service is an agency under the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The cases I selected for this study represent a variety of historic place types that have been impacted by legend tripping. The sites include cemeteries, a seasonal family recreation camp and a covered bridge. All four of these serve as powerful examples of the elements of legend tripping and demonstrate how real site stewards have addressed the impacts. The following is a brief, introductory description of each location. A more detailed analysis of each site is available in the appendix.

Illuminators

“Black Aggie,” Pikesville, Maryland/Washington, D.C. This dramatic statue of a shrouded woman was placed in Druid Ridge Cemetery in 1907 by Felix Agnus, newspaper publisher and U.S. Civil War veteran, to adorn his family plot.¹⁰ Figure 2 shows the location of Druid Ridge Cemetery, just inside the Baltimore Beltway (I-695). Not long after the interment of Agnus himself in the mid-1920s, legends began to spread about the statue and late night-visitors began visiting the site. Tales tell of the statue’s eyes glowing red at midnight and her arms encircling anyone foolish enough to sit on her lap so she can drag them to Hell. Black Aggie was acknowledged to cause pregnancy in unmarried women and end pregnancies in those who were expecting.¹¹ She could make intrepid nighttime visitors go blind or crazy, or curse them to an imminent death. The legend tripping continued for many years until the burden became too much. Tired of the recurring damage to the statue and surrounding memorials, the Agnus family donated the statue to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. in the 1960s.¹² The legend of Black Aggie persists despite the fact that the

¹⁰ Ed Okonowicz, *Haunted Maryland: Ghosts and Strange Phenomena of the Old Line State* (Lanham, MD: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2020), 41.

¹¹ Matt Lake, *Weird Maryland* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 2006); Blank and Puglia, *Maryland Legends: Folklore Form the Old Line State*; Okonowicz, *Haunted Maryland: Ghosts and Strange Phenomena of the Old Line State*.

¹² Mike Bennett, interview by author, via telephone, March 25, 2022

statue was removed from the cemetery almost sixty years ago. The statue continues to be included in collections of Maryland legend and haunted stories, in print and on-line.¹³

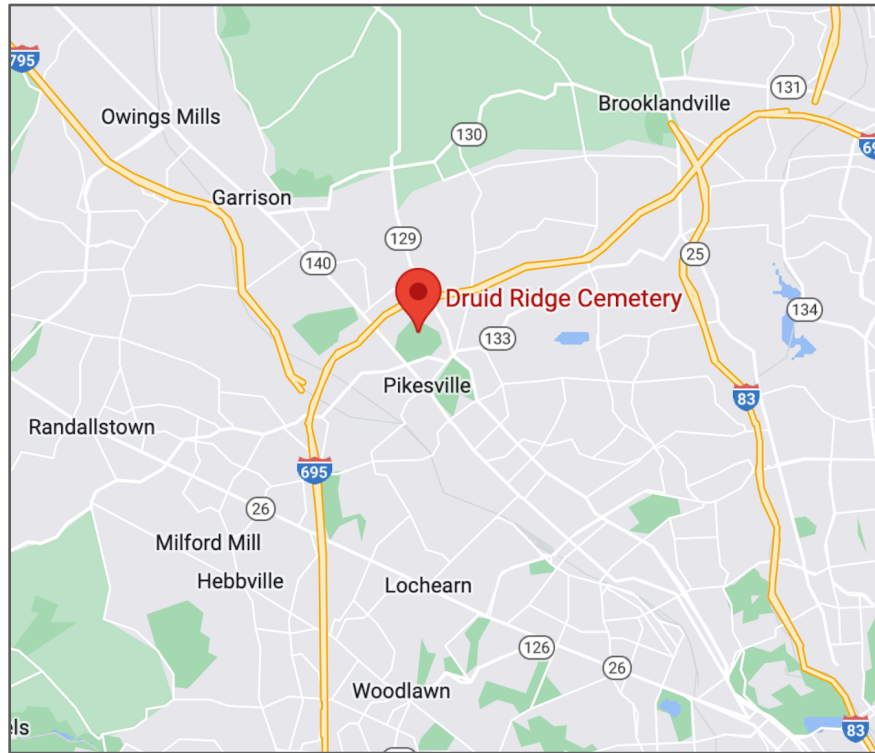


Figure 2. Druid Ridge Cemetery, Pikesville, Maryland. [Google Maps; May 2, 2022]

Black Aggie currently resides in the courtyard of the Cutts-Madison House in downtown Washington D.C.¹⁴ Given its proximity to the White House and the fact that it currently serves as a federal courts building, the area is under heavy guard. It is safe to assume that legend trippers are not visiting Black Aggie in her current home.

¹³ Bill Ellis, “Legend Tripping in Ohio: A Behavioral Survey,” in *Legend Tripping: A Contemporary Legend Casebook*, ed. Lynne S. McNeill and Elizabeth Tucker (Louisville, CO.: University Press of Colorado, 2018), 31.

¹⁴ Okonowicz, *Haunted Maryland*.

*Hatch's Camp, Logan, Utah.*¹⁵ Construction began on Hatch's Camp in Cache County, Utah around 1915. Figure 3 shows the location of Hatch's Camp in Logan Canyon, approximately eight miles from the city of Logan. Originally constructed as a private family seasonal camp by the wealthy Hatch and Odum families, the camp contains twenty one buildings and structures. In the 1950s, the Hatch family donated the property to the Catholic church who used the camp as a retreat for nuns and priests and as a summer camp for disadvantaged children.¹⁶ After the Catholic diocese took ownership of the camp, stories began to spread about activities that occurred there, including tales of pregnant nuns drowning their babies in the swimming pool after giving birth.¹⁷ Legend trippers were said to be rewarded with the sounds of ghostly babies crying in the night and the snarls of hell hounds. Although the Catholic Diocese transferred ownership of the land to a private company in 1994, legend tripping continues to beleaguer Hatch's Camp, resulting in theft of materials, damage to structures and other vandalism.¹⁸

¹⁵ Hatch's Camp is also known as St. Ann[e]'s Retreat, the Nunnery, Forest Hills, and Pine Glen Cove.

¹⁶ Rachelle Handley, "Hatch's Camp Questions - U.S. Forest Service," March 24, 2022.

¹⁷ Lisa Gabbert, "Legend Quests and the Curious Case of St. Ann's Retreat: The Performative Landscape," in *Putting the Supernatural in It's Place: Folklore, the Hypermodern, and the Ethereal* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2015).

¹⁸ Handley.

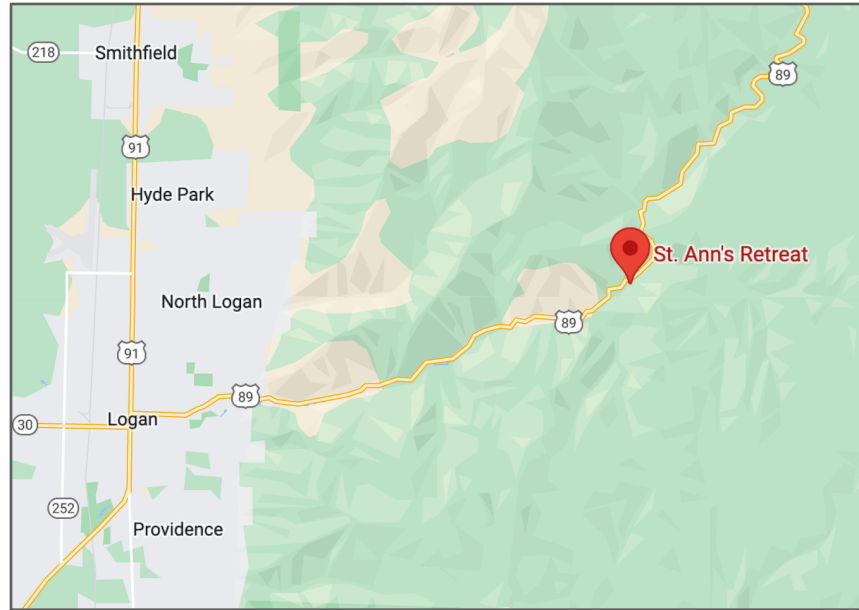


Figure 3. Hatch's Camp in Logan Canyon, Cache County, Utah. [Google Maps; May 2, 2022]

Jericho Covered Bridge, Kingsville, Maryland. The Jericho Covered Bridge, built in 1865, connected small mill towns in Baltimore and Harford counties.¹⁹ Figure 4 shows the location of the bridge over the Little Gunpowder Falls. The bridge is now part of Historic Jerusalem Mill Village, a living history museum in Gunpowder Falls State Park, operated by the Friends of Jerusalem Mill (FOJM) volunteer organization. The associated legends, including claims that enslaved people were hanged from the bridge's rafters, have no connection to historical events according to the President of the Friends of Jerusalem Mill²⁰ Though it is unclear when legend trippers first began visiting the site, the practice has continued with several carloads of curious trippers visiting as recently as Halloween of 2021.

¹⁹ John McGrain, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form: Jericho Covered Bridge" (Maryland Historical Trust, September 1978).`

²⁰ Rick Decker, interview by author, Kingsville, Maryland, January 23, 2022.



Figure 4. Jericho Covered Bridge in Kingsville, Maryland. [Google Maps; May 2, 2022]

Edgar Allan Poe Burial Site, Baltimore, Maryland. Edgar Allan Poe, one of America's greatest horror writers, is buried in Westminster Hall Burying Ground in downtown Baltimore, Maryland. Figure 5 shows the location of the site, just northwest of the Inner Harbor. For over fifty years, Poe's grave was the location of yearly visits from the notorious Poe Toaster. During those years, every January 19th a dramatic and mysterious black-cloaked figure wearing a black hat and white scarf would visit the grave under cover of darkness and leave an offering of a bottle of cognac and three roses. The Poe Toaster acted alone and the event was not publicly known for many years. In the late 1970s a new tour guide at Westminster Burying Ground learned of the alleged annual visits and invited a few friends to witness the event with him once he confirmed that the Poe Toaster was

real.²¹ Attendance at the annual vigil to see the Poe Toaster grew over the years. With some breaks due to the retirement of the original Toaster and while determining a path forward, the Poe Toaster is now a cherished family-friendly event.

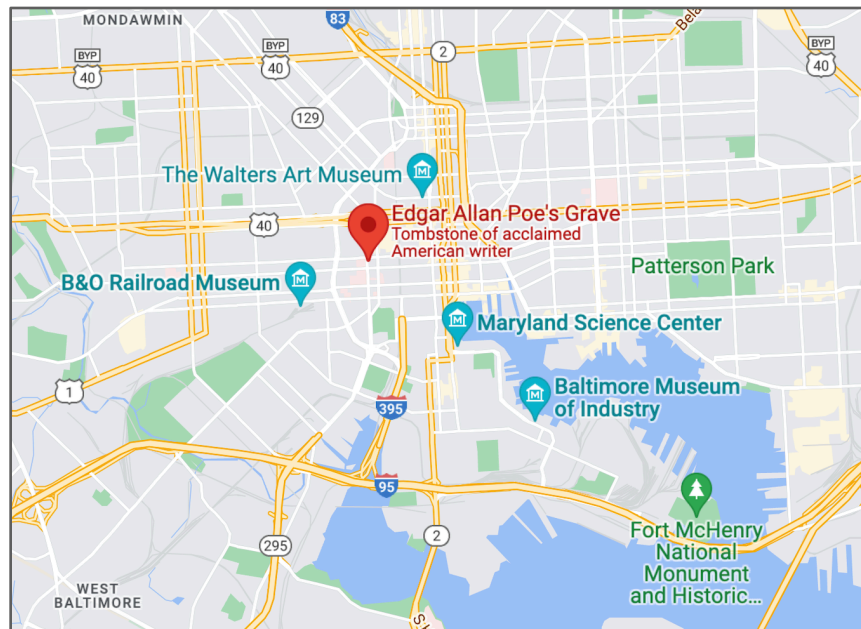


Figure 5. Edgar Allan Poe's Grave, Baltimore City, Maryland. [Google Maps; May 2, 2022]

Although this study relies primarily on the examples I selected to illuminate my discussion, I also gathered information on legend tripping locations from the research studies and other articles I referenced, as well as a few other sites with which I was already familiar or discovered in my research. While the illuminators provide most of the support for my assertions, these additional sites do add helpful context and perspective on some of the topic discussed herein. Figure 6 offers a representation of the locations of the various sites.

²¹ Jeff Jerome, interview by author, Baltimore, February 10, 2022

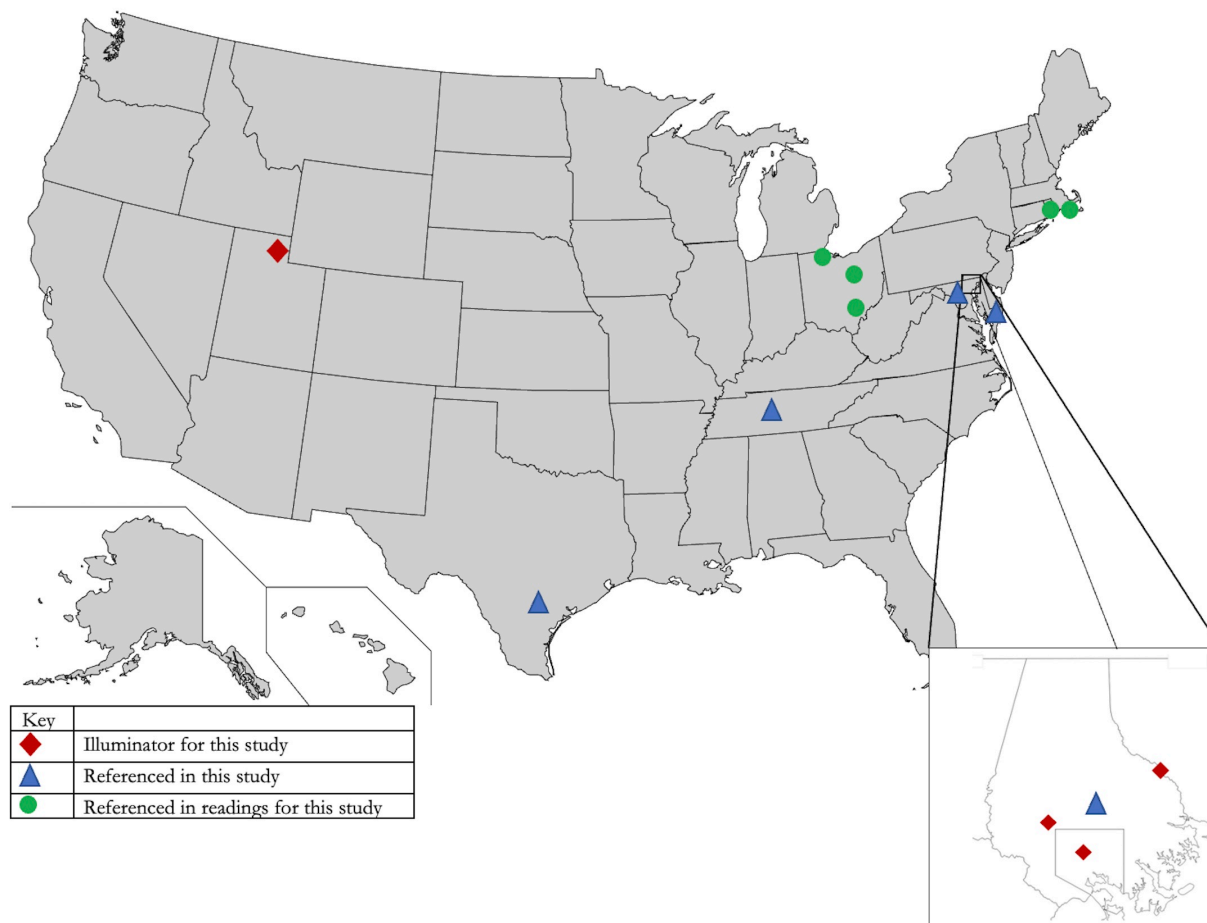


Figure 6. Location of the lighthouse destinations used for this study. The inset shows locations in Baltimore City and Baltimore County in Maryland.²²

²² “Baltimore County Map” accessed May 19, 2022, https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=42739&lang=en.

Prominent Scholars

Study of the impacts on historic places requires a clear understanding of two important aspects that converge in the tradition of legend tripping. One is the concept of place, including sense of place, particularly as it relates to historic places. The other is that of the legend tripping phenomenon itself, including the legends, participants, motivations, and performances. For this discussion, I selected two scholars in each category that have contributed most to my understanding of these concepts and who provide a solid foundation upon which to build my arguments. The scholars discussed below by no means represent an exclusive list of scholars in these areas.

Place Scholars

The study of place rests primarily within the realm of geography, though multiple disciplines, including historic preservation, acknowledge concepts of place, sense of place and place attachment as important components of their theory and practice. Place scholars examine the human-place dynamic in many contexts. Although they may view place through different lenses, the two scholars central to my review offer important insight about the importance of place.

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan examines the concept of place as it applies to a variety of themes. Using global cultural illustrators, Tuan offers insight into the way people create, interact with, organize, understand, and honor place. Most relevant to this thesis are Tuan's studies on the connections between language and place. Tuan describes how people use words in many ways, including in narratives, to describe a place beyond its physical attributes and that the specific words used influence our

perception of a place, even one we have not visited personally. He notes, “Words have consequences. Almost everything we say illuminates some object and casts shadows over others.”²³ Tuan recognizes experiential connections to place which commonly occur over time but acknowledges they can occur when an experience is “brief but intense,” as well as through stories.²⁴ Legend tripping involves both of the latter concepts in that the participants are forming a connection with place initially through the story or legend, then strengthening that connection through interaction with the site. Tuan also explores less pleasant aspects of place connection and sense of place in his book *Landscapes of Fear*. In this work he describes how traditional beliefs and practices impact a culture’s conceptualization of the dead (ghosts) and how stories of the dead (ghost stories) signal “strong continuity of place.”²⁵ Tuan’s work supports the connection between story and place integral to the phenomenon of legend tripping.

David Lowenthal, geographer and historian, wrote comprehensively about the past and humankind’s complicated relationship with it from global, national, local and personal perspectives. His analysis includes humanity’s often complex relationship with landscapes and places of the past. Lowenthal explores how ideas of nostalgia, memory, history, continuity and identity coalesce into how we feel about places associated with or reflecting our heritage. His work considers relics (the aesthetics of “old things”), and preservation as important to understanding the value that people ascribe to places. Lowenthal recognizes the individual’s feelings about place as an important factor in

²³ Yi-Fu Tuan, “Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81, no. 4 (1991): 684–96, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1991.tb01715.x>.

²⁴ Yi-Fu Tuan, “Time and Place,” in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 184.

²⁵ Yi-Fu Tuan, “Fear of Human Nature: Ghosts,” in *Landscapes of Fear* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 125, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1221407>.

determining what is worth saving. He recognizes significance of places to the community over formal aesthetic qualities and notes, “Things worth saving need not necessarily be beautiful or historic as long as they are familiar and well loved.”²⁶

Legends and Legend Tripping

To date, the study of legend tripping has primarily been undertaken by folklorists. As such, the studies tend to focus on the legends, the rituals and performance thereof, and the attendant behaviors common to the practice of legend tripping. Fortunately, folklorists are often comprehensive in their data collection and reporting and therefore include information about place and setting that, which while not necessarily germane to their work, may be relevant to scholars in other fields. Although not directly focused on the physical impacts to places, these studies comprise a substantial collection of research into the motivations and performance (ostension) of legend tripping. Careful analysis of the studies conducted by these scholars can, in many cases, provide insight into the impacts legend tripping activity can have on historic places. Although there are many others, two legend-trip scholars are fundamental to my understanding of legend tripping and the primary basis of the framework for this study.

Linda Dégh was a folklorist who specialized in legends and legend performance. Her work includes studies of the role of belief in legends, collection and detailed review of legend variants, and examination of legend performance, as in legend tripping. Dégh’s seminal work on ostension, “Does the Word ‘Dog’ Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend Telling,” written with husband Andrew Vázsonyi, offers a detailed analysis of ostension (performance of legend elements) as presentation of reality, rather than a representation or signifier. Using Halloween festivities, which include traditions

²⁶ David Lowenthal, “Environmental Perception: Preserving the Past,” *Progress in Human Geography*, December 1, 1979, 555.

based on and driven by legends, as a means to illustrate their premise, they discuss four types of “ostensive folklore communication,” which are often employed in seasonal storytelling of supernatural events and beings, and can drive the ostensive actions associated with legend tripping.²⁷ Dégh uses behavioral observations to understand how people interact with and give action to legends. Directly applicable to legend tripping, Dégh’s studies present an extensive review of the performance of the rituals and actions identified by legends that are alleged to generate the extraordinary events.²⁸ To engage in these rituals is one of the main reasons for the legend tripper’s visit.

Folklorist Bill Ellis has written extensively on legend tripping and ostension. His studies primarily center on the activities and behaviors in which legend trippers engage. Ellis often discusses three forms of ostension that can occur during legend trips: ostension, pseudo-ostension and quasi-ostension, and how the behaviors and rituals associated with each may be viewed by others as having nefarious origins when in reality they are means of reenacting a legend in the real world. He cautions against the tendency of outsiders (generally adults and authority figures) to misinterpret the effects of legend tripping as evidence of Satanic or cult activity. Ellis frequently references physical consequences that occur at legend tripping destinations, including graffiti, building of “altars,” smashing of gravestones and other harm. In his article “Legend Tripping in Ohio: A Behavioral Survey,” Ellis observes that the automobile is a “little examined but essential feature of a legend trip.”²⁹ I would add that appropriate place - a destination that fits the story and that is ultimately impacted

²⁷ Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, “Does the Word ‘Dog’ Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend-Telling,” *Journal of Folklore Research* 20, no. 1 (1983): 5–34.

²⁸ For Dégh’s studies of legend performance, see Dégh and Vázsonyi; Linda Dégh, “The Haunted Bridges Near Avon and Danville and Their Role in Legend Formation,” *Indiana Folklore* 2, no. 1 (1969): 54–89; Linda Dégh, “What Is A Belief Legend?,” *Folklore* 107 (1996): 33–46.

²⁹ Ellis, “Legend Tripping in Ohio,” 66.

by ostensive behaviors of legend trippers - is another essential legend trip feature which is underexamined in the literature. Ellis' inclusion of data related to the of physical effects on legend trip sites, along with exploration of how such effects can lead to consternation within the community, provides excellent support for the fact that stewards of historic places targeted by legend trippers would benefit from understanding the true stimulus for the effects.

Place and Preservation

As the nexus of the elements of legend tripping, place is an essential concept in this thesis. It is the location where the events of the legend are alleged to occur, the location where legend trippers engage in legend rituals, and the location impacted by the legend tripper's actions. As I will explore in subsequent chapters, the places involved in legend tripping are often historic and therefore may hold multiple meanings for different people and groups. Understanding how place-related concepts, including sense of place and place attachment, contribute to the meaning and value that people ascribe to their physical environment, and how that, in turn, informs which historic places people would like to see preserved, is a key premise of this study. This section provides an overview of the concept of place, including why places are meaningful to people, and the role place plays in historic preservation.

The Importance of Place

Place is a significant element of human experience. Scholars have studied what distinguishes generic space from a meaningful place and found that place is constructed from space through our interactions with and around it – our experiences, our language, our traditions, and other connections. Geographer Tim Cresswell notes, “Space, then, has been seen in distinction to place as a realm without meaning – as a ‘fact of life’ which, like time, produces the basic coordinates for human life.

When humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way...it becomes a place.”³⁰ In contrast to space, Tuan contends that place “is the past and the present, stability and achievement.”³¹ In other words, while space always surrounds us, it is place that has meaning.

Both our individual and cultural sense of identity is generally formed in relation to the places we are from, the places we frequent, and the places we have been.³² All we do as humans occurs in places; therefore, place is often the framework we use to organize and remember our experiences. Philosopher Dylan Trigg asserts that, “Place is at the heart not only of who we are, but also of the culture in which we find ourselves. As invested with cultural, ecological, and political ramifications, place does not simply designate a patch of land without value.”³³

The term “sense of place” refers to our feelings about a place, how we feel when we are in a place and the feelings that the place gives to us. Lowenthal notes, “Every image and idea about the world is compounded, then, of personal experience, learning, imagination, and memory,” and these together contribute to our sense of place.³⁴ Cultural geographer Kent Ryden argues that, “...we all

³⁰ Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015), 17.

³¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, “Place: An Experiential Perspective,” *Geographical Review* 65, no. 2 (1975): 165, <https://doi.org/10.2307/213970>.

³² Edward Relph, “Identity of and with Place,” *Placeness, Place, Placelessness* (blog), January 31, 2021, <https://www.placeness.com/identity-of-and-with-place/>.

³³ Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place : A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012), 1.

³⁴ David Lowenthal, “Geography, Experience, and Imagination: Towards a Geographical Epistemology,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 51, no. 3 (1961): 260.

have a sense of place of some sort, on some patch of ground, even in the most unlikely places; if we sit and think and talk, we can all attach stories...”³⁵

Place attachment arises from a sense of place about a particular location that also includes emotions, experiences and connections. Cultural anthropologist Setha Low describes place attachment as “the symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual’s and group’s understanding of and relationship to the environment.”³⁶ Low goes on to acknowledge that place attachment is about more than experiences but rather also includes “cultural beliefs and practices that link people to place.”³⁷ This concept highlights that place attachment isn’t strictly an individual experience but rather it applies equally to a culture or folk group and takes into consideration the activities in which we engage.

Many of those who study place believe that human feelings are cultivated by the significance and duration of a person’s interaction with the place. They claim that generation of these feelings requires prolonged interaction with the site, such as residing or engaging in repeated visits to a location over time.³⁸ As I will explore in Chapter II, however, some scholars suggest that sense of place

³⁵ Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place*, The American Land and Life Series (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 293–94, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10481056>.

³⁶ Setha M. Low, “Symbolic Ties That Bind: Place Attachment in the Plaza,” in *Place Attachment*, Human Behavior and Environment, Advances in Theory and Research 12 (Boston, MA: Springer US, 1992), 165, <http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=3085127>.

³⁷ Low, 165.

³⁸ Tuan, “Place.”

and attachment to place may develop in a different way in some cases. Rather than through interaction with place over time, some scholars acknowledge that these bonds with place grow through story.³⁹

Place in Preservation Practice

Notwithstanding our sense of place and place attachment to contemporary locations, old places serve in a special capacity to link us with the past and our collective history. Lowenthal notes, “Every object, every view is intelligible partly because we are already familiar with it through our own past and through tales heard, books read, pictures viewed. We see things simultaneously as they are and as we viewed them before; previous experience suffuses all present perception.”⁴⁰

At the most basic level, the aspects of sense of place and place attachment described above are a large part of what historic preservation aims to safeguard. Maintaining historic places that physically embody the meaningful attachments we form links to our memories and supports our perception of continuity.⁴¹ Historic preservation seeks to preserve material and cultural aspects of our history, “not just for understanding our own history but for our sense of ourselves.”⁴² The identity, memory and history as manifested in old places are what practitioners of historic preservation aim to protect for future generations.

³⁹ David Lowenthal, “Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory,” *Geographical Review* 65, no. 1 (1975): 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/213831>; Tuan, “Language and the Making of Place.”

⁴⁰ Lowenthal, “Past Time, Present Place,” 6.

⁴¹ Thompson M. Mayes, *Why Old Places Matter: How Historic Places Affect Our Identity and Well-Being* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018).

⁴² Stephanie Meeks, “Foreword: The Power of Old Places,” in *Why Old Places Matter: How Historic Places Affect Our Identity and Well-Being* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), xvii.

Since its inception, historic preservation has primarily focused on protecting and maintaining physical sites and landscapes. However, preservation practitioners are now expanding their view to include intangible heritage, including festivals, foodways, music and other traditions.⁴³ Many contemporary preservationists are also making a concerted effort to reimagine the practice to accurately reflect societal diversity by focusing on inclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups.⁴⁴ Preservationist Robert Stipe recognizes this shift to a more people focused preservation. He notes, “Beyond question, in the last two decades the American preservation movement has made serious, sustained, and successful efforts to become much more inclusive of human values.”⁴⁵ The shift to a more people-centric approach in historic preservation has broadened what preservation practitioners consider places worth saving. In fact, some preservationists are starting to revisit previously evaluated sites to uncover as-yet untold stories in an effort to tell the “full American story.”⁴⁶

Stephanie Meeks, former President and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, reminds us that old places “help us understand that, though we ourselves may be mortal, our actions will echo on after we are gone, just as those of previous generations inform our world today.”⁴⁷ Old places reflect achievements in design and technology, and serve as connections to important people and events from our past.⁴⁸ They act as reference points, reminders, and, in some

⁴³ National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Preservation for People: A Vision for the Future* (Washington D.C., 2017).

⁴⁴ National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Preservation for People*.

⁴⁵ Robert E. Stipe, “Where Do We Go from Here?,” in *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Robert E. Stipe (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 471.

⁴⁶ National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Preservation for People*.

⁴⁷ Meeks, “Foreword: The Power of Old Places,” xvii.

⁴⁸ U.S. National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15*.

cases, cautionary tales. The value ascribed to historic places by individuals, communities and cultures is what makes preservation efforts necessary and worthwhile.

Conclusion

Legend tripping is often linked to historic places because they convey what we perceive to be the appropriate atmosphere for the uncanny or extraordinary events in the legend. However, the connection to historic places, and engagement in legend trip behaviors at such sites, is accompanied by the potential for real physical consequences. Stewards of impacted historic places may not be familiar with the term “legend trip,” but they are nonetheless very familiar with the practice and its outcomes.

This treatise will explore the connections between narrative and place by exploring how language and story can influence the way people feel about places and motivate them to visit a place that they may not normally encounter. I will examine the concept of legend tripping, explore the community of legend trip participants, detail the key activities, and discuss how legends are shared. I will review the impacts of legend tripping on historic places through evidence gleaned from legend trip scholarship, investigation of the illuminator sites, and other supporting data. Finally, I will conclude this study with a discussion of practices and strategies that owners and stewards of historic places can consider to address the impacts of legend tripping in an effort to support on-going maintenance and preservation of the site.

CHAPTER II: ON STORY AND PLACE

“The telling itself, not always accompanied by ritual, has the power to endow a site with vibrant meaning.”

-- Yi-Fu Tuan, “Language and the Making of Place:
A Narrative-Descriptive Approach.”

People form attachments to places through myriad connections and experiences. This attachment, or bond, with place is fundamental to the value we bestow on places as individuals, communities, and cultures. Further, the way that people feel about places and the value they ascribe to them is part of what drives the practice of historic preservation.

One means by which people can form a bond with a place is through narratives, or stories. In addition to conveying details about a site’s history and physical features, stories can also create and enhance a sense of place through descriptive elements and details. Legends are a narrative type that can have strong associations with specific places and in some cases may include an element of potential for extraordinary experiences that make the place more alluring.

This chapter will explore the connections between place and story, discuss legends as a type of folk narrative that can have strong place associations, explore the means by which legends are generally shared among people, and explore these related concepts through the discussion of two site examples.

Creation of Sense of Place Through Story

Narratives are one of the many ways through which people can develop a sense of place or place attachment. Most people can remember encountering a story at some point with descriptions so rich, details so vivid, and, perhaps, an outcome so unusual or unexpected that they felt as though they could see and experience the place in their minds. Stories strongly connected to specific places can create place attachment through the image the listener constructs of a place in addition to a desire to experience the place.

Importance of Narratives

Whether factual or fictitious, narratives can construct a “place” in the listener’s mind; one that can be called to life and experienced within the realm of imagination. In seeking to understand the “role of human speech in creation of place,” geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has carefully considered the connection between language, including narrative and place.⁴⁹ First and foremost, he notes that space cannot become place until words are attached to it that describe the aspects of the place.⁵⁰ It is through words that we describe how a place looks, what similar thing it resembles, whether it is light or dark and other relevant attributes from which we develop a corresponding feel for a place. According to Tuan, “words have the general power to bring to light experiences that lie in the shadow or have receded into it, and the specific power to call places into being.”⁵¹ Further, he notes that, “language enables us to understand the *quality* (the personality or character) of place better, for that

⁴⁹ Tuan, “Language and the Making of Place,” 684.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 688.

⁵¹ Ibid., 686.

quality is imparted by...the metaphorical and symbolic powers of language.”⁵² Within this view, story can make real through imagination a place that the listener has not yet experienced.

Cultural anthropologist Setha Low asserts that “narratives, that is, the telling of stories...can function as a type of cultural place attachment in that people’s linkage to the land is through the vehicle of the story and identified through place naming and language.”⁵³ Low believes that not only the stories, but the performance of telling the story can link people to place through a cultural lens which reflects a group’s shared sense of experiences, broadening the view of place attachment from an individual to a group experience. As I explore legend tripping and legend trippers in greater detail in the next chapter, I will discuss the communities of legend trippers and how they can be considered cultural or folk groups.

Stories are required to ensure places remain relevant and remembered. Tuan acknowledges the importance of narrative in the perpetuation of place and describes how the continued telling of stories serve to maintain place, at least within our memories:

A material building, if not properly maintained, will soon fall apart. To continue to exist, places must be kept in good repair. They can also be improved upon through alterations and additions. Much the same is true of places created by language, oral and written. "Mount Misery" will fade from consciousness if it is not kept alive by social support - if the name is not passed on by word of mouth or written on a map that is periodically consulted. "Mount Misery" will continue to exist in people's minds and even, in the course of time, seem more real if not only the name is used but stories, continually elaborated, are told. What was a mere marker on the horizon can be transformed, by imaginative narration, into a vivid presence.⁵⁴

⁵² Tuan, “Language and the Making of Place,” 694.

⁵³ Low, “Symbolic Ties That Bind: Place Attachment in the Plaza,” 173–74.

⁵⁴ Tuan, “Language and the Making of Place,” 689.

Tuan also notes that narratives can be a powerful means of communication about aspects of a place that are not immediately conveyed through visual images, including feeling.⁵⁵ Feeling is important in the consideration of place and is one of the seven aspects of integrity that the National Park Service (“NPS”) measures against to determine whether a property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The NPS defines feeling as “a property’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.”⁵⁶ While the NPS definition is geared to the physical and visual aspects of a place, their inclusion of feeling as an aspect of integrity demonstrates that how people feel about a place is important, and as established, narratives also contribute to how people feel about places.

Importantly, while narratives communicate information necessary to inform a sense of place about a location not yet physically encountered, they can also inform the sense of place created when one finally experiences the place, directly or indirectly. Hearing a spooky tale will conjure various associated images and expectations that, once at the site, serve as the lens through which the site is understood and experienced. Tuan notes, “...the quality of human communication, including (preeminently) the kinds of words and the tone of voice used, seems to infect the material environment, as though a light – tender, bright, or sinister – has been cast over it.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Tuan, “Language and the Making of Place,” 691.

⁵⁶ U.S. National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 15:45.

⁵⁷ Tuan, “Language and the Making of Place,” 690.

Folk Narratives

In the simplest terms, as folklorist Lynn S. McNeill explains, folklore is “informal, traditional culture.”⁵⁸ Folk narratives are stories that are shared among members of folk groups; that is, people with a shared set of experiences, such as employment at the same company, attendance at the same educational institution, or other commonalities.

Folk narratives are distinct from literature and architectural descriptions. In folklore there is an expectation that through traditional telling, as the story is used and shared, natural variations in the storyline will occur as each legend teller tweaks the story to be relevant to her audience.⁵⁹ This kind of evolution and fluidity is not seen in formal works.

Historic narratives tend to enumerate the persons and events that, when combined, describe a sequence of events of historic importance. These stories are accurate and verifiable through contemporaneous documentation and scholarly research, but they can still be full of information that contributes to how we imagine places and build a sense of place. Folk narratives can contain verifiable historic facts also, but they often include events that wouldn't necessarily be considered of historic importance outside of the folk group sharing the story. One example of narrative folklore is the legend.

⁵⁸ Lynne S. McNeill, *Folklore Rules: A Fun, Quick, and Useful Introduction to the Field of Academic Folklore Studies* (University Press of Colorado, 2013), 13, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hjz10>.

⁵⁹ McNeill, *Folklore Rules*, 6–7.

Legends Defined

Legends are a form of narrative folklore that can contribute to sense of place and place attachment. Legends exist across a multitude of cultures and centuries, and serve a number of purposes. Folklorist Elliott Oring notes, “the stuff of legends – the supernatural, the horrific, the disastrous, the uncanny, the improbable, and the comical – is the stuff of our everyday attention and conversation.”⁶⁰ The goal of this section is not to offer an exhaustive exploration of the legend genre, but rather to offer a basic overview of the key legend elements, particularly as relevant to historic places and the practice of legend tripping.

The Real and The True

Two hallmarks of legends are that they are set in the real world and they are told as true. Although legends can be independent of verifiable history, that is, made-up, fanciful, or fantastic, they are associated with a recognizable place or area. Unlike myths which are set in fantasy realms, legends are set in the real world with recognizable features and a reasonable, recognizable time line.⁶¹

The other important element of legends is that, regardless of the accuracy or verifiability of the details of the story, they are told as true.⁶² Legends are purported to happen to real people within

⁶⁰ Elliott Oring, “Legendry and the Rhetoric of Truth,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 121, no. 480 (2008): 127, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20487594>.

⁶¹ Heda Jason, “Concerning the ‘Historical’ and the ‘Local’ Legends and Their Relatives,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 84, no. 331 (1971): 134–44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/539740>.

⁶² Oring, “Legendry and the Rhetoric of Truth.”

a real setting.⁶³ The fact that these stories are told as true, and that they actually happened to someone from the same spheres of society as the listener, make it easier for these accounts to be considered credible. The elements of realism make it seem like extraordinary events could be experienced by the listener as well.⁶⁴

Historical legends are often based on a kernel of historical fact. The historical fact may be tied to a verified person, event or place that existed in the past, but through the legend process the story can become more compelling as embellishments are layered on. Historic legends can take the accomplishments of a real historical figure and, through hyperbole, elevate significant though mortal feats into the realm of the fantastic.

The Extraordinary, Fantastic, and Supernatural

One common legend element crucial to the concept of legend tripping is the extraordinary, fantastic, or supernatural thing that may happen to people who visit the site under certain conditions, and what actions one must perform once there to increase the odds of experiencing the phenomenon. The legends that are the focus of legend trippers don't necessarily have a supernatural element as part of the original (sometimes historic) account. However, the potential to experience a supernatural or extraordinary occurrence in the present connects the story from long ago with an interaction point for contemporary listeners. It is the potential for an uncommon experience that invites participants into the tale and allows them to decide to go to the site and see for themselves.

Some legends may claim that the ghost of an innocent victim can be seen or that an inanimate statue may come to life. Regardless of the lack of any actual or verifiable evidence that these

⁶³ Paul Manning, "No Ruins. No Ghosts.," *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 6, no. 1 (2017): 68, <https://doi.org/10.5325/preternature.6.1.0063>.

⁶⁴ McNeill, *Folklore Rules*, 40.

fantastic claims are true, the stories continue to be told and re-told. McNeill and Tucker, though, think that, "...the emphasis on possibility makes this genre an important means for exploring the nature of reality."⁶⁵ And, according to folklorist Terry Gunnell, when you step into places of potential "you step into legend."⁶⁶ The notion of entering into the legend and seeing if one is capable of inciting an extraordinary response is a very compelling reason to legend trip.

Not all legends involve supernatural elements, however. Many legends center on larger-than-life characters and events within an otherwise realistic time period and historical record, as in the historical legends described previously. Many of us were told about and studied American legends, including Paul Bunyan, John Henry and Johnny Appleseed, in childhood. While these legends certainly detailed extreme and heroic feats, they do not include the element of potential for on-going experiences and interaction with the legend. That is to say, these sorts of heroic legends don't signal to the listener that if they do the right thing at the right time and place, they may just encounter a character or event from the legend.

Place Based Legends

Legends with strong place connections can act as an intangible stimulus to engage with tangible places. For the purposes of this study, I use the term "place-based legend" to refer to those legends with a specific identifiable location, as in a particular named site.⁶⁷ As I discuss in Chapter

⁶⁵ Lynne S. McNeill and Elizabeth Tucker, *Legend Tripping: A Contemporary Legend Casebook* (University Press of Colorado, 2018), 4.

⁶⁶ Terry Gunnell, "The Power in the Place: Icelandic Alagablettir Legends in a Comparative Context," in *Storied and Supernatural Places. Studies in Spatial and Social Dimensions of Folklore and Sagas*, ed. Daniel Valk and Danie Savborg (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society/SKS, 2018), 27, <http://www.oapen.org/download?type=document&docid=1000208>.

⁶⁷ For clarity, as opposed to migratory legends that are not tied to a specific place and legends with a more regional application, place-based legends are tied to named places (e.g., Hatch's Camp, Jericho Covered Bridge, Poe's Grave, etc.) to distinguish them from just any bridge, camp, cemetery, etc.

III, place-based legends in which a suitable location is combined with the possibility of uncanny or supernatural experiences can create a bond strong enough to prompt people to make the effort to visit the site.

The place in place-based legends is often specific and in some form tied to the elements of the narrative. In fact, to some extent the building or landscape could be considered an enduring character in the story, one that is impacted by time and events. Folklorists Lisa Gabbert and Paul Jordan-Smith note, “some places are real, some are imagined, and some real places are overlaid by the imaginary – a phenomenon so ubiquitous that it may be universal.”⁶⁸ As noted earlier, whether or not the events actually occurred at a site is irrelevant. The layering of the place of reality with the place of story combine into a single place of legend.

Place-based legends are not always tied to the built environment. Many cultures have legends tied to naturally occurring or manmade landscape features and sites.⁶⁹ Some of these landscapes can contain valuable cultural resources and evidence, as is the case in ancient burial mounds or barrows. The legends created around these places also contain a supernatural element but can be framed in such a way as to indicate the possibility of something bad happening to a person who visits these sites in order to act as a deterrent to site visits, effectively acting as a form of place preservation in some cultures.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Lisa Gabbert and Paul Jordan-Smith, “Introduction: Space, Place, Emergence,” *Western Folklore* 66, no. 3/4 (2007): 223.

⁶⁹ Gunnell, “The Power in the Place: Icelandic Alagablettir Legends in a Comparative Context”; Ülo Valk and Danie Sävborg, “Place-Lore, Liminal Storyworld and Ontology of the Supernatural. An Introduction,” in *Storied and Supernatural Places*, 1 online resource (284 pages) vols. (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society/SKS, 2018), 7–24, <http://www.oapen.org/download?type=document&docid=1000208>.

⁷⁰ Gunnell, “The Power in the Place.”

Historic Place as Legend Setting

Many place-based legends are set in historic places. As defined in Chapter I, the term historic place may indicate inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or other local lists and inventories of historic places, eligibility to be listed, or they may simply be or look old. Historic places are a fitting subject of some legends as they convey a sense of the past and an air of mystery not readily found in contemporary sites. Such places are often referred to as liminal spaces, meaning those that occupy spaces on both sides of a boundary or threshold – past and present, real and unreal, life and death. In “No Ruins, No Ghosts,” Paul Manning describes the importance of a setting that initiates feelings appropriate to the story. Using the example of ghost stories, Manning acknowledges how stories of the uncanny can only effectively have ruins as their setting. “Real ruins,” he states, “are foundational to narratives of haunting, or rather, that landscapes act as narrative affordance, something that does not determine but affords – enables or constrains – the plausible telling of specific kinds of narratives with respect to specific kinds of landscapes.”⁷¹ In other words, the appropriate setting is needed to produce the opportunity for appropriate responses in people.

Interestingly, in some cases the physical structure or site may serve to dictate the elements of the story. Considering Manning’s discussion of affordance theory, it is reasonable that a place in the right condition or with a particular combination of features and traits can be the inspiration for a legend independent of historic events. For example, a dilapidated vacant house with a widows walk may give rise to a legend of a ghostly woman waiting eternally for a loved one’s return. This supports the idea that not all legends are historical (some are simple fantasy), and that in some circumstances the legend is created and grows to fit the location. According to legend scholars Dégh and

⁷¹ Manning, “No Ruins. No Ghosts,” 67.

Vázsonyi, “the content, style, context, exterior shape, and way of transmission and reception of the legend sometimes suggest that not only can facts become narratives, but narratives can turn into facts as well.”⁷²

Not all Legends are Made for Tripping: Migratory Legends

Not all legends, even those of the supernatural variety, are connected to a specific and identifiable location, however. Migratory, or non-place-based, legends can also contain an element of supernatural expectation – the possibility of encountering the fantastic – but they are associated with a broader or more general geographical area.⁷³ These legends often have as their subject mysterious lights, fog and mists, smells, beasts, spirits or other unusual occurrences or characters that roam over a large area rather than remaining tied to a specific place.

Maryland is home to several migratory legends. One example is “Chessie.” Maryland’s version of the Loch Ness Monster, Chessie has been witnessed at many points along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay for decades but is not tied to a specific beach or other maritime location.⁷⁴ The Goat Man is another Maryland legend that involves a supernatural being that is encountered over a broader geographic area. Alleged to be, among other things, a government experiment escaped from the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, the Goat Man has been seen along roads and in the

⁷² Dégh and Vázsonyi, “Does the Word ‘Dog’ Bite?” 5.

⁷³ Reidar Thoralf Christiansen, *The Migratory Legends; a Proposed List of Types with a Systematic Catalogue of the Norwegian Variants*, FF Communications 175 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1958).

⁷⁴ Tamara Dietrich, “Scotland Has Nessie ... Does Hampton Roads Have Chessie?,” *dailypress.com*, accessed January 30, 2022, <https://www.dailypress.com/news/dp-chessie-sea-monster-20140820-post.html>.

woods of Prince George's County.⁷⁵ The Snallygaster is another excellent migratory legend. The Snallygaster, based largely in the Frederick County area, is a giant terrifying winged creature all the more intriguing as its legend is admittedly based on a hoax.⁷⁶

It's easy to see how the wide distribution of sightings and encounters with these migratory legends makes it unlikely that those wishing to experience a phenomenon for themselves will go to the same places in all cases. Further, there is no ostensive element, or performance, to increase the possibility of summoning the creature. While offering a similar thrill and sense of uncanny possibility, legends that are not tied to a specific place are less likely to result in a specific location being the site of repeated visits, and therefore less likely to experience impacts compounded over time. In these legends it is understood that the creature functions separately from the location, therefore the sense of place and feeling required for these legends is not as important.

How Legends are Shared

Folklore, here as legends writ large, has experienced shifts in means of dissemination over the last few decades, as have most other categories of information, given the swift and ceaseless march of technology. Transmission of tales that once primarily occurred in direct interpersonal communications are now "told" electronically to larger audiences. In this section I will offer a brief overview of traditional and contemporary folklore dissemination.

⁷⁵ "The Goatman--Or His Story, at Least--Still Haunts Prince George's County | Washingtonian (DC)," *Washingtonian* (blog), October 30, 2015, <https://www.washingtonian.com/2015/10/30/the-goatman-or-his-story-at-least-still-haunts-prince-georges-county/>.

⁷⁶ Blank and Puglia.

Traditional Legend Dissemination

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Yi-Fu Tuan believes that stories and places must be shared to live on. Narrative folklore is one means for perpetuating those stories. Traditional means of folklore and legend dissemination occurs and is “continually reinforced” through face-to-face interaction, though they have also been shared in written texts.⁷⁷ Dégh and Vázsonyi examine how folklore is transmitted using the example of legends. One of the reasons they use legends to illuminate folklore transmittal is because legends “appear most frequently in non-oral dissemination” such as in written form.⁷⁸ They assert that “legends proliferate and disseminate with increasing speed and over wider space, exercising more direct influence on the society that called them into existence.”⁷⁹

Legends are typically shared among members of folk groups. Folk group (teens, coworkers, congregation members, etc.) often circulate legends that are relevant to their shared interests and beliefs. Folk groups keep legends alive through transmission to new group members and by sharing legends within other folk groups members may also be a part of. Folklorist Jan Brunvand notes that “groups of age-mates, especially adolescents, are one important American legend channel.”⁸⁰ In recent decades the oral component of these traditions has expanded to continue in written and visual form via electronic means in social media and other platforms, as discussed in more detail below, even among members of the same folk group.

⁷⁷ Dégh, “The Haunted Bridges,” 54.

⁷⁸ Dégh and Vázsonyi, “Does the Word ‘Dog’ Bite?,” 5.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1981), 5.

Contemporary Legend Dissemination

The growth of the Internet and myriad social media platforms and resources have not left folklore behind. In fact, the ubiquity of the Internet assures that legends are exposed to a broader range of potential participants. Rather than changing or inhibiting the way legends are shared, electronic platforms instead supplement and support the traditional flow of the stories.

Countless websites and blogs, including many created by individuals to share personal content, and many that allow for feedback and exchange of information among website visitors, serve to extend into the virtual realm the social network or folk group of the person sharing the legend. Additionally, these platforms allow interested parties to search for and curate their experiences based on topic, location, or theme. The Internet allows ordinary people to share the stories they've heard and experiences they've had with a potentially global audience.

Podcasts are another recently developed platform falling within the electronic media realm. With a relatively small investment, just about anyone can develop and record a podcast.⁸¹ And there is no shortage of widely available legend related podcasts: *Astonishing Legends*, *Beyond Legend*, *The Dead History Podcast*, *Legend Podcast*, *Legend Has It*, *So Says Legend*, *Unearthly Upstate*, *Ohio Folklore*, *Encounters*, *The Folklore Podcast*, *Just a Story: Urban Legend Podcast*, *Squaring the Strange*, and *Urban Legends*, to name a few. These on-demand, portable, and searchable, podcasts make legends available to anyone with the interest and the technology to access them. One no longer needs the luck of encountering someone who shares a story, they can actively search for material of interest from their own homes.

⁸¹ Many sites offer instructions for creating a podcast. Examples include: The Podcast Host (<https://www.thepodcasthost.com/planning/how-to-start-a-podcast/>); Podcast Insights (<https://www.podcastinsights.com/start-a-podcast/>); and National Public Radio (<https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/662070097/starting-your-podcast-a-guide-for-students>).

Whether legends are shared via traditional or contemporary means, they remain a customary form of culture and continue to migrate, change and evolve. Both allow for on-the-fly embellishment based on listener reactions. According to McNeill and Tucker, “all legends have the potential to migrate quickly, taking on new features and characteristics as they travel.”⁸²

Discussions of Legend and Place

Black Aggie

The Legends:

The story-place connection in the Black Aggie legend doesn't require a great deal of narrative detail to support. The legends surround the statue of a shrouded woman that marked the Agnus family plot in Druid Ridge Cemetery. Cemeteries are a traditional and ideal location to convey the proper air of eerie possibility in a legend. In this real-world setting a legend formed about disturbing events that occur during nighttime visits to a grave marker.

The legends associated with Black Aggie claim the potential for certain “supernatural” occurrences if a visitor to the site performs the identified ostensive actions. For example, looking into the statue's eyes will cause one to go blind and sitting in her lap will result in imminent death.⁸³ Tales indicate that her eyes glow red at midnight, the dead rise from their graves to gather round her, and that the statue's lifeless arms once encircled a young boy sitting in her lap, frightening him to

⁸² McNeill and Tucker, *Legend Tripping*, 6.

⁸³ Lake.

death.⁸⁴ Despite being the bona fide Agnus family memorial statue (albeit one with a bit of controversy attached) the legends that surround the statue are not at all associated with the actual family's history.⁸⁵

Black Aggie legends endure despite the fact that the statue at the center of the legend was removed from its original location in 1967. The legends continue to be disseminated in legend collections on-line and in new print publications to this day.⁸⁶ According to Mike Bennett, General Manager of Druid Ridge Cemetery, people occasionally visit the site with the expectation that Black Aggie is still there, confusing another nearby bronze figure for the legendary statue and in some cases causing damage to the other gravesite.⁸⁷ The cemetery also still receives phone calls now and then enquiring about Black Aggie.

The Historic Place

Druid Ridge Cemetery, currently a member of the Dignity Memorial family of interment providers, opened in 1898 but is not listed in the NRHP, the Maryland Inventory of Historic Places, or the Baltimore County Landmarks List. It is notable for its peaceful park-like setting and for the number of notable Baltimoreans interred there. Because the statue itself was donated to the Smith-

⁸⁴ Krista Smith, "Black Aggie: The Spooky Graveyard Statue of Druid Ridge Cemetery -," Baltimore Fishbowl, October 28, 2011, <https://baltimorefishbowl.com/stories/black-aggie-the-spooky-graveyard-statue-of-druid-ridge-cemetery/>.

⁸⁵ "Black Aggie" is actually an unauthorized reproduction of an earlier grave marker in Rock Creek Cemetery outside Washington, D.C. (dubbed "Grief"), which was created for the Adams family. When the forgery came to light, there was some contention between the families as to the appropriate way to handle the situation. For more on the scandal, see Cynthia J. Mills, "Casting Shadows: The 'Adams Memorial' and Its Doubles." *American Art* 14, no. 2 (2000): 3–25.

⁸⁶ Blank and Puglia, *Maryland Legends*; Okonowicz, *Haunted Maryland*; Lake, *Weird Maryland*.

⁸⁷ Bennett.

sonian in the 1960s, and later to the U.S. government's General Services Administration, all that remains of Agnus family memorial statue is the plinth upon which she initially rested (see fig. 7).⁸⁸ To quote *Weird Maryland*: “Some legends, it seems, don’t even need the physical feature that spawned them.”⁸⁹



Figure 7. Empty Agnus pedestal, Druid Ridge Cemetery, Pikesville, Maryland. The headstones of Ann Agnus (mother to Felix), Felix Agnus, and Annie Fultun (wife of Felix) rest in front. [Amy Weber; May 5, 2022]

Aggie’s current home is within the U.S. Court of Federal Claims building approximately one block from the White House in a heavily secured area of Washington D.C. The statue rests within an interior courtyard of the courts building and is only accessible Monday through Friday, when the

⁸⁸ John Kelly, “‘Black Aggie’: Cloaked in Superstition,” *The Washington Post*, August 19, 2012, sec. Metro.

⁸⁹ Lake, 15.

iron gates between the street and the courtyard are open. There will be no further illicit midnight visits to Aggie without potential serious national security repercussions.

Jericho Covered Bridge

The Legends

The legends surrounding this covered bridge persist despite the fact that no one has been able to verify any of the historical events alleged to give rise to the claims of extraordinary or paranormal experiences. For example, one legend tells of the lynching of run-away enslaved people despite the fact that no evidence has been uncovered to support that any such event occurred at the bridge.⁹⁰ Another macabre tale claims that local teens hung themselves on the bridge as part of a suicide pact.⁹¹ Other legends tell of a monkey like creature and a demon with red eyes patrolling the underside of the bridge.⁹² Witnesses claim to see ghostly forms hanging from the bridge's rafters, that their cars mysteriously stall while traveling over the bridge and that handprints have appeared on their vehicles after driving over the bridge late at night.⁹³

⁹⁰ Decker.

⁹¹ "Haunted Jericho Covered Bridge Kingsville, Maryland," *Outta the Way* (blog), October 7, 2013, <http://outaway.blogspot.com/2013/10/haunted-jericho-covered-bridge.html>.

⁹² Melissa Mahoney, "One Of The Most Haunted Bridges In Maryland, Jericho Covered Bridge Has Been Around Since 1865," *OnlyInYourState*, December 12, 2020, <https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/maryland/haunted-jericho-covered-bridge-md/>.

⁹³ Mahoney.

The Historic Place

Jericho Covered Bridge is situated within Gunpowder Falls State Park (see fig.8). Constructed circa 1865, the bridge was added to the NRHP in 1978 and is also in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, the Baltimore County Landmarks List and the Maryland State Historic Bridge Inventory.⁹⁴



Figure 8. Approach to Jericho Covered Bridge from the south. Kingsville, Maryland.
[Amy Weber; January 23, 2022]

In this case, even if the pivotal elements of the legend are untrue (e.g., no creatures live under the bridge⁹⁵) the setting – in the woods, nestled by a small historic village and amongst widely-spaced houses set well back from the road – conveys the appropriate eerie aura to afford the possibility for uncanny occurrences.

⁹⁴ Jericho Covered Bridge designations: National Register of Historic Places: https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/Medusa/PDF/NR_PDFs/NR-493.pdf; Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties and Maryland State Historic Bridge Inventory: <https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/Medusa/PDF/BaltimoreCounty/BA-361.pdf>; and Baltimore County Landmarks Listing: <https://resources.baltimorecountymd.gov/Documents/Planning/historic/landmarkbooklet.pdf>.

⁹⁵ Mahoney, “One Of The Most Haunted Bridges In Maryland, Jericho Covered Bridge Has Been Around Since 1865.”

Conclusion

Narratives are one of the means by which people can develop and expand sense of place and build an attachment to a place or setting. Through the words used to describe a place and ways these stories are shared, people develop an image and feeling that initiates a bond. Stories foster place attachment by providing details about a place and generating desire to see a place for one's self. The place attachment described in this chapter can produce an attachment that creates the motivation necessary to trek to a site, even one that is not typically considered welcoming, hospitable, or comfortable.

Legends are a story type that are told as true and set in a realistic spatial and temporal location, but that often have an uncanny or supernatural element. To support the right type of feeling for these supernatural occurrences, the physical locations must reflect or appear to accommodate this possibility. Sometimes, the anticipation and excitement afforded by a place as described in the narrative are alluring enough to overshadow the potential for short term discomfort, especially when accompanied by an opportunity to experience the unexplained or extraordinary. The people who act on the desire to visit a site to see if they experience the supernatural are called legend trippers.

CHAPTER III: TRIPPING THE LEGEND FANTASTIC

“The trip, not the legend, is the thing.”

-- Bill Ellis, *Aliens, Ghosts, and Cults: Legends we Live*.

People who engage in legend tripping activities experience and attach meaning to place as motivated by story. The actions and performances in which they engage when visiting a legend trip destination are largely informed by the events in the narrative, including the claims of others to have experienced uncanny events. Folklorists and other legend trip scholars typically view legend trips as having three phases: sharing of stories and legends among participants traveling to the destination, engaging in certain activities at the site, and recounting experiences to add onto the stories on the return home.⁹⁶ As it relates to historic preservation, the second phase of the experience represents the potential for impacts to historic places.

⁹⁶ Kenneth A. Thigpen Jr., “Adolescent Legends in Brown County: A Survey,” *Indiana Folklore* 4, no. 2 (1971): 141–215.

This chapter will describe the basic elements of legend tripping, the communities of people who participate in legend trips, and how contemporary legend trip stories are commonly transmitted. This chapter will also demonstrate the importance of ostension in legend tripping, and describe how the legend trip elements are embodied through examination of three examples.

Legend Tripping Explained

As described briefly in Chapter I, legend trip is the term used to describe the practice of visiting a site associated with a legend and performing certain actions while there in an effort to experience the extraordinary or supernatural events described in legends and as alleged to have happened to others. Two key elements of the legend trip are a legend with an identified place and a ritual or action to perform that reenacts the legend.

Take, for example, the legend of Big Liz on Maryland's Eastern Shore. According to the story, Big Liz was an enslaved woman during the Civil War who was decapitated and buried by her enslaver near DeCoursey's Bridge in Dorchester County. No matter the sequence of events leading up to her horrific demise (the specific events vary among versions), there is one commonality when it comes to Big Liz: all one need do to see her ghost is to drive a car up to the bridge at midnight, honk the horn three times, flash the headlights twice and turn the car off. Legend trippers who carry out these steps will be rewarded with the sight of Big Liz with her head under her arm, red eyes glowing.⁹⁷ Another variant instructs that the ritual is to first turn off the car, then flash the high beams three times and honk the car horn six times.⁹⁸ Regardless of the specific ritual or order of

⁹⁷ Mindie Burgoyne, "Big Lizz and the Swamps of Dorchester," Chesapeake Ghost Tours (blog), March 7, 2018, <https://chesapeakeghosts.com/big-lizz/>.

⁹⁸ Blank and Puglia.

steps, Liz's legend is perfect for tripping. The only tools necessary to participate are a car and a heaping dose of gumption.

Legend, Location, and Ritual

Folklorist S. Elizabeth Bird notes, "It is well documented that local legends tend to develop around particular types of places – bridges, cemeteries, unusual graves, deserted houses, and so on."⁹⁹ As discussed in Chapter II, historic places often provide a fitting legend setting. Although both actual and perceived history can act as a motivator for legend tripping behavior, a suitable destination is required in all cases. "For a legend quest to occur," asserts folklorist Lisa Gabbert, "there must be a legend — that is, a narrative about an extraordinary event purported to be true — and there must be a specific locale where the event allegedly took place. Legend questing behavior could not exist without the element of landscape."¹⁰⁰

As described in the Big Liz legend example, the other feature important to legend tripping is an action for trippers to perform that will allow them to enter into the world of the legend themselves. Known as ostension, legend trippers perform specific actions at the site as outlined by the legend to elicit the extraordinary or supernatural event. Legend trippers understand that if they perform the correct combination of headlight flashes and horn blasts, they will see the specter of Liz herself.

The performance can be active steps as in the Big Liz legend, but for some legends it simply involves visiting the site at a certain time (mid-night, moonless nights, full-moon nights, foggy

⁹⁹ S. Elizabeth Bird, "Playing with Fear: Interpreting the Adolescent Legend Trip," in *Legend Tripping: A Contemporary Legend Casebook*, ed. Lynne McNeill and Elizabeth Tucker (Louisville, CO.: University Press of Colorado, 2018), 116.

¹⁰⁰ Gabbert, "Legend Quests and the Curious Case of St. Ann's Retreat," 112.

nights, Halloween nights, etc.).¹⁰¹ Legend tripping rituals can also involve the leaving of offerings or mementos such as coins, votive candles, and other small offerings to serve as evidence of a legend tripper's visit to the site (see fig. 9).¹⁰²



Figure 9. Alleged headstone of John Wilkes Booth, Greenmount Cemetery, Baltimore, Maryland. Leaving coins on headstones is a common legend trip ritual, though not exclusive to that activity. It is difficult for observers to determine the reason the coins are left in a particular case.¹⁰³ [Photograph courtesy of Carla Kennedy]

Performances of the actions identified in the narrative over the course of repeated visits – that is, legend trippers engaging in the same behaviors at the same places over and over – turn ac-

¹⁰¹ Dégh, “The Haunted Bridges.”

¹⁰² Donald H. Holly and Casey E. Cordy, “What’s in a Coin? Reading the Material Culture of Legend Tripping and Other Activities,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 120, no. 477 (2007): 335–54, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20487558>.

¹⁰³ Holly and Cordy.

tions into ritual. The rituals, performed time and again, are important to reinforce and grow the legend. Without the ritual to invoke a response, legend trippers would be left to rely on fortune to reveal the supernatural.

Legend Tripping and Tourism

Both legend tripping and tourism involve traveling to a site for a new or unique experience. Similar to legend tripping, tourism, particularly heritage tourism, is the primary means through which people visit historic places. In contrast to legend tripping, however, tourism is often a source of income and advocacy for historic places. Two types of tourism share common elements with legend tripping: heritage tourism and dark tourism. Although these types of tourism share similar features to legend tripping, they can be distinguished in a few important ways.

Heritage tourism is the term used to describe visiting historical sites looking for authentic experiences and to be entertained.¹⁰⁴ Heritage tourism can involve historical reenactments, which are a type of performance for display or educational purposes. Although these reenactments can take on the role of ritual through repeated performance, they are generally enacted by site staff, rather than the visitors and they are not intended to provoke an uncanny event. Folklorist Regina Bendix discusses heritage tourism in terms of expressive culture for the sake of tradition and display of what the community want to present about themselves.¹⁰⁵ There are some who call for reconsidering who determines which stories and traditions are shared, however. Geographer Emma Waterton suggests that those responsible for heritage tourism sites should reconsider their assumptions about what

¹⁰⁴ Regina Bendix, "Tourism and Cultural Displays: Inventing Traditions for Whom?," *The Journal of American Folklore* 102, no. 404 (1989): 131–46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/540676>.

¹⁰⁵ Bendix.

should be preserved and displayed and put more control over these matters back into the hands of the community to decide what they value, which could include the community of legend trippers.¹⁰⁶

Dark Tourism is a category of tourism that centers on places and events associated with tragedy, disaster, death and the macabre. These are “sites, attractions or events that are linked in one way or another with death, suffering, violence or disaster” to which people will travel to witness or encounter.¹⁰⁷ The term dark tourism typically encompasses locations of unspeakable horrors, such as Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, Hiroshima in Japan, and Ground Zero in New York. However, an argument could be made for the purposes of this study that the term could be extended to also include locations of smaller scale tragedy, like the house where the notorious Lizzie Borden is alleged to have murdered her father and stepmother in Fall River, Massachusetts. Like dark tourism locations, legend tripping destinations often involve places where death and tragedy have or are alleged to have occurred.

While heritage tourism and dark tourism clearly share some common elements of history and tragedy with legend tripping, ultimately it is their differences that mark the critical distinction in terms of historic places. Unlike legend trips, which often occur without invitation or authorization, traditional tourism destinations usually offer curated narratives and experiences accessible during normal operating hours. And although the types of tourism outlined above may also include elements of performance and reenacting, those performances are typically staged by employees or volunteers, without meaningful reenacting by the visitors. The controlled nature of these performances

¹⁰⁶ Emma Waterton, “Whose Sense of Place? Reconciling Archaeological Perspectives with Community Values: Cultural Landscapes in England,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 11, no. 4 (January 2005): 309–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527250500235591>.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Sharpley, “Shedding Light on Dark Tourism: An Introduction,” in *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, Aspects of Tourism (Bristol, UK ; Channel View Publications, 2009), 6, <http://www.dawsonera.com/abstract/9781845411169>.

both in terms of actions and actors, significantly reduces the likelihood of damage to the site. Most importantly, tourism is typically an undertaking for profit or funding, whereas legend trippers often only need gas money.

The Community of Legend Trippers

Legend trippers comprise an informal community, or folk group, who are connected through shared interest in the legends associated with a site, who travel to the site to engage in performances of the legend, and who then enhance and embellish the narratives by adding their own experiences and/or the experiences of their peers to the legend. While the focus of this thesis is on the impact of legend tripping on historic places, a brief discussion of who legend trips and why will add context to the understanding of the practice of legend tripping.

Most legend trippers view the event as recreational, providing a thrill and escape from boredom.¹⁰⁸ Ellis agrees that “the ostensive traditions reflected in legend-trips are best understood as part of this complex *recreational* activity, not as attempts to control entities or forces that affect common sense reality.”¹⁰⁹ Though, admittedly, it may provide a means of proving their courage and testing their beliefs.¹¹⁰

While adults do engage in legend tripping, it largely known as a pursuit of adolescents. Folklorist Lisa Gabbert notes,

In the absence of meaningful, duly-sanctioned rites of passage, teenagers must create their own. The legend trip serves this function in modern society, for unlike tribal cultures, which

¹⁰⁸ Patricia M. Meley, “Adolescent Legend Trips as Teenage Cultural Response,” in *Legend Tripping: A Contemporary Legend Casebook*, ed. Lynne S. McNeill and Elizabeth Tucker (University Press of Colorado, 2018), 72–93.

¹⁰⁹ Bill Ellis, “Legend-Trips and Satanism: Adolescents’ Ostensive Traditions as ‘Cult’ Activity,” in *The Satanism Scare*, ed. James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 287.

¹¹⁰ Ellis, “Legend-Trips and Satanism.”

celebrate initiation rites rarely in an individual's lifetime, modern American teenagers must repeat the ritual over and over again. Because their incorporation into adult society is not acknowledged by that society, teenagers must, on an individual basis, make a judgement about their own level of maturity.¹¹¹

Gabbert likens teens that engage in legend trips almost as “folktale heroes” in their own right: “teens leave the safety of home and travel to a remote geographical locale where odd things occur, frequently aided by consciousness-altering substances such as drugs and alcohol.”¹¹² Presumably, the same can be said for the adult participants.

The Role of Belief

Dégh asserts that belief may be inherent in all legends; however, belief in the supernatural is not required to engage in the practice of legend tripping.¹¹³ Granted, it is reasonable to assume that initial transmission of the legend and early legend trips to the site might require at least some level of belief to make the trip worth taking. Gabbert explains that, “narratives (and, more broadly, belief) play a role in this process, but it is the conjoining of belief, narrative, landscape, and behavior in particular ways that conditions possibilities of performativity for a site itself.”¹¹⁴

Some people do participate in legend trips as skeptics with the aim of disproving the legend, though, in effect such behavior proves their belief that the supernatural claims are false.¹¹⁵ In line with the notion that a participant is not required to believe in the extraordinary or supernatural

¹¹¹ Meley, “Adolescent Legend Trips as Teenage Cultural Response,” 91.

¹¹² Gabbert, “Legend Quests and the Curious Case of St. Ann’s Retreat,” 123.

¹¹³ Dégh, “What Is A Belief Legend?”

¹¹⁴ Gabbert, “Legend Quests and the Curious Case of St. Ann’s Retreat,” 123.

¹¹⁵ Ellis, “Legend-Trips and Satanism.”

claims of the legend, whether they have undertaken the trip to prove or disprove the legend is irrelevant. Regardless of the motivation behind the legend trip, the fact that the tripper visits the site and interacts with the place through engagement in the rituals can have physical impacts on the site.

Legend Trippers as a Folk Group

A folk group is a collection of people who share a connection. Examples include folk groups based on age, interests or beliefs, or shared space, like workplaces or other institutions.¹¹⁶ Based on this description, it is reasonable to consider legend trippers as a folk group of disparate individuals connected by their shared interest in stories that offer a chance to experience an extraordinary or supernatural occurrence and in reenacting the rituals required to enter into the legends themselves. Through this shared interest, these folk groups value these historic places in a manner not typically contemplated by preservationists and site stewards. The term shared in this context does not necessarily mean sharing together in person at the same place and time, but rather sharing in terms of experience and interest in the narratives.

The folk group of legend trippers is ephemeral. To the extent that the legend tripping folk group is based on age and interest, these factors can change rapidly in adolescence. However, the seemingly “fleeting” population in the legend tripping folk group is not dissimilar to the changes brought on by employee turnover in a workplace folk group, for example. The basis for the group, in this case the legends, their places and the associated performances, remains the same while generations of legend trippers enter and leave the group.

Bill Ellis also addresses legend trippers as a folk group. He refers to a “cluster of adolescents as a *folk group*, a collection of individuals that share informal, face-to-face contacts and so generate

¹¹⁶ Alan Dundes, “Who Are the Folk,” in *Frontiers in Folklore* (Routledge, 1977).

and share specialized information and attitudes.”¹¹⁷ The truth of the matter notwithstanding, writing this statement as he did in 1991, Ellis could not have anticipated the profound and far-reaching effects that the Internet and other digital platforms would have on the world of folklore and legend tripping, by adding alternative options to the requirement for face-to-face contacts among group members.

Transmission of Trip-worthy Legends

Beginning in October each year (sometimes earlier), websites and publications both related and unrelated to legend tripping begin to share collections of spooky stories and legends in the spirit of Halloween. These collections claim to include the “most haunted places” in an area or sometimes an assembly of stories based on a theme, like haunted houses, bridges, or cemeteries. Without necessarily invoking the practice of legend tripping, these collections can serve as the impetus for a legend trip.

How Tripping Legends are Shared

Websites, podcasts, and social media forums provide far reaching platforms for the legend tripping community, whether as specifically targeted or generally through sharing of stories and experiences. Legends are spread to a broader audience more rapidly, often with the added validation of one or more first-hand accounts and testimonials. Legend trippers can often add to the legends in real time on-line via comments, enhancing the stories, creating variants, and enticing others to participate and engage with real places. Notably, these platforms can also offer an outlet for those who

¹¹⁷ Ellis, “Legend-Trips and Satanism,” 281.

aim to disprove or debunk the stories. This creates another group who decide to “see for themselves,” which broadens the population of legend-trippers even further to include those who aim to disprove the accounts of extraordinary events.¹¹⁸

McNeill and Tucker observe that “a local legend that doesn’t get much attention locally may find new life on-line.”¹¹⁹ In addition to the legend podcasts identified in the previous chapter, there are also podcasts specific to legend tripping, including *Legend Trip*, *Hello? Tales and Legend Trips*, and *Beyond Legend*. Podcasts can bring “new” legends to eager legend trippers willing to travel a bit further afield for a new and exciting experience.

Other interesting ways that legend trips can be shared include using a geographic information system (GIS) to create individual legend tripping story maps.¹²⁰ Pinterest, a platform commonly used as a tool to collect and curate website links, also includes links to legend tripping websites. A recent search for “legend tripping” on Pinterest returned eight websites directly associated with legend tripping in the first ten results. The results included a website identifying legend tripping sites in Alabama, published by Everything Alabama; a link to Legendtripping.com; a link to the Wikipedia page on legend tripping; several links to various pages of Greenville Paranormal’s website;

¹¹⁸ Podcasts such as *Superduperstitious* and *Squaring the Strange* endeavor to offer fact- and science-based alternate explanations for supernatural legend claims. This approach could spur legend trippers who seek to debunk the claims by other participants of uncanny experiences.

¹¹⁹ McNeill and Tucker, “Introduction,” 27.

¹²⁰ For an example of a personal legend tripping story map, see <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=d63845bfe9714af682823db566aa7477>. This ArcGIS site contains extremely limited information – no date, no name, and the photos appear unavailable at this time, but the structure offers an interesting look at how legend trips can be shared using story map technology.

and a youtube.com video of a show called *Spirit Connections*, where the hosts interview a photographer who documents legend trip events.¹²¹

Legends and legend trip details are certainly shared by people who participate in legend trips, but information on legend tripping can be shared by others as well. Folklorists share legend tripping information in and through their analysis of legend narratives and examination of legend tripping behaviors. Media outlets can address legend tripping for entertainment or human interest purposes. Legends can also be shared by a person or group wishing to draw attention to a legend or place, even if the reason for sharing is unrelated to the practice of legend tripping. Legends and legend trips shared via digital media foster a culture of people who may never meet in person, may not join together or engage in person, and may not have the same backgrounds, values or spiritual beliefs, but who share the motivation to engage with places based on legend.

Role of Ostension

The element of legend tripping that brings the greatest likelihood of physical impacts to places, particularly to historic places, is the element of legend performance known as ostension. The legends that prompt legend trips typically have this performative element which requires the participant to engage in some specific activity or set of activities in order to “activate” the legend. In this way legend trippers are essentially reenacting what is told in the legend. Calling again to Big Liz, if the particular version of the legend heard by a group of trippers stated that prior legend trippers flashed their high-beams twice, honked their horn six times and successfully summoned the ghost,

¹²¹ For these links see: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/189010515589844766/>; <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/502644008415995481/>; <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/62557882299694533/>; <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/518758450807222345/>; <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/667940188480610977/>; <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/164662930097977790/>; <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/667940188480610937/>; and <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/324611085612259396/>.

then the next group will dutifully follow those same required steps. It is possible, in fact, that some of the variants of the legend that stipulate a different performance – a different combination of flashes and honks, for example – might arise when the first combination is unsuccessful.

Do What They Say

Bird notes that “the trip itself is inextricably bound to a particular site, and it involves more activities than, say, a legend telling session in a dorm room.”¹²² Ostension can be viewed as the combining of the supernatural world with reality.¹²³ “The alternate reality produced is one in which the landscape of legend becomes real and actual people become characters in a story they already know,” claims Gabbert.¹²⁴ She goes on to say that, “Participants know what happened at this place and what might happen again if they only look hard enough. If they act ostensively—if they enact the elements of the story—it is because this is their duty as characters in an ongoing plot.”¹²⁵

Dégh and Vázsonyi describe ostension as “presentation as contrasted to representation”¹²⁶ They propose three subcategories of ostension, which McNeill and Tucker efficiently summarize as: “pseudo-ostension, a hoax; proto-extension, a narrator’s appropriation of a legend as his or her own experience; and quasi-ostension, a misunderstanding of something that takes place.”¹²⁷ While each of

¹²² Bird, “Playing with Fear,” 114.

¹²³ Meley, “Adolescent Legend Trips as Teenage Cultural Response.”

¹²⁴ Gabbert, “Legend Quests and the Curious Case of St. Ann’s Retreat” 123–24.

¹²⁵ Gabbert, 124.

¹²⁶ Dégh and Vázsonyi, “Does the Word ‘Dog’ Bite?,” 6.

¹²⁷ McNeill and Tucker, “Introduction,” 11.

these recognize the variability in actions and intent of legend trippers, ultimately the specific categorizations are immaterial when viewing legend tripping through the lens of historic preservation. Regardless of the motivation, the action – sometimes a harmful or violent action – still occurs. It is important to note, though, that ostensive traditions are not always harmful or destructive. Dégh and Vázsonyi also describe ostensive activities as tied to Halloween traditions as relatively harmless.¹²⁸

Examples of ostensive behaviors can include action such as knocking or tapping on a surface a prescribed number times, flashing lights, or sitting in a particular place, among innumerable others. In describing visits to a haunted bridge near Avon, Indiana, Dégh and Vázsonyi note, “seekers of a ‘good scare’ shine their lights on the bridge and honk their horns to induce the reenactment of the tragic event from the past.”¹²⁹ The aim of engaging in the performance is to elicit or provoke a response. The point is to test reality and see if, by following the steps, the participants will be rewarded with the sought after otherworldly or uncanny image or effect.

Legend Tripping Examples

Black Aggie

The statue of Black Aggie, a dark, seated figure enveloped in flowing veils, kept watch over the Agnus family plot for decades. Sometime after the death of General Felix Agnus in the mid-1920s, legends started to circulate of supernatural events experienced by late night visitors to the site.¹³⁰ Legends suggested that sitting in Aggie’s lap and looking into her eyes would cause one to

¹²⁸ Dégh and Vázsonyi, “Does the Word ‘Dog’ Bite?,” 20.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Okonowicz, *Haunted Maryland*.

lose their sight, their mind, their baby (if pregnant) or their life. Other legends claim that if an intrepid legend tripper were to spend the night sitting in her lap, her arms would encircle and crush them during the night. Clearly, common rituals as described in the legends associated with Black Aggie involve physically sitting on the statue, but in order to perform the rituals, the legend trip also necessarily involves trespassing into the cemetery after hours, and likely loitering for several hours while waiting for the rituals to work.

In spite of the fact that the Black Aggie statue has not graced the Agnus family plot since the 1960s, her legends continue to be published online, in books, and other media, as well as shared among individuals on social media platforms. As recently as 2020, author Ed Okonowicz published *Haunted Maryland: Ghosts and Strange Phenomena of the Old Line State*, another collection of supernatural stories from Maryland, which includes the story of Black Aggie and the legend-worthy events alleged to occur at her grave.

Jericho Covered Bridge

At the Jericho Covered Bridge, according to one legend, if visitors stop at the entry, then “burn out” they will see the ghosts of hanging victims in the rearview mirror.¹³¹ Accounts vary as to who these hanging victims are, but in any case, leaving rubber tire marks on the historic bridge is damaging and requires resources and technical knowledge of how to best remove these marks from the wood bridge deck. Site caretakers indicate that at this point in time, it is not necessarily locals but those from out of state who are more likely to engage in legend trips to the site. On Halloween night

¹³¹ Decker. “Burn out” means effectively engaging an automobile’s accelerator so suddenly and firmly that the wheels spin rapidly before gaining traction, which then often creates a loud screeching noise and can leave rubber residue on the roadway as the tires find their purchase.

of 2021, caretakers found two separate groups of cars – from New York and New Jersey respectively - parked at the bridge in search of supernatural activity.¹³² Caretakers leveled responsibility for the presence of these out-of-state visitors firmly and directly on the wider circulation of the legend afforded by the Internet. A few years ago, a local preservation advocacy organization played an unwitting role in potentially driving legend tripping to the site. In their May 13, 2016 blog post, Preservation Maryland offered a collection of the “Three Most Haunted Sites in Maryland.”¹³³ The Jericho Covered Bridge was included in the collection and while the article did include some information on the history of the bridge and a short paragraph about the recent extensive restoration work completed at the site, it also described the legends and tales associated with the bridge, including sightings of “silhouettes of people hanging from the bridge’s trusses,” “a woman with a badly burned face, and an animal-like creature said to protect the bridge from unwanted visitors.”¹³⁴ The Friends of Jerusalem Mill, caretakers of the bridge, were not happy to receive such publicity. The president of the group claims he contacted the preservation organization to point out that the historical accounts in the legends have “no basis in fact” and that continuing to circulate the “false” legends could result in real damage to the site.¹³⁵

¹³² Decker.

¹³³ Preservation Maryland, “Three Haunted Historic Sites in Maryland,” Preservation Maryland, May 13, 2016, <https://www.preservationmaryland.org/friday-the-13th-2016-haunted-maryland/>.

¹³⁴ Preservation Maryland.

¹³⁵ Decker.

Poe Toaster

The Poe Toaster phenomenon involved a mysterious man in black who visited the Poe family monument in downtown Baltimore every year, late at night, on January 19, the anniversary of Edgar Allan Poe's birth (see fig. 10). After a bit of dramatic fanfare, the Toaster left three roses and a bottle of cognac (after a tippie in Poe's honor, of course) at the base of the monument, to the delight of the crowd of on-lookers whose numbers increased year after year.



Figure 10. The Poe Monument in Westminster Cemetery. [Amy Weber; February 10, 2022]

The Poe Toaster visits, and the associated legend, began sometime before 1950 (although no one really knows an exact date) and the performance occurred every year until 2009, when the visits abruptly ceased.¹³⁶ After a few years with no Poe Toaster, the Maryland Historical Society (now the Maryland Center for History and Culture) felt that the tradition should be revived and held a contest to find a replacement mysterious stranger to visit the site and perform the steps every year.¹³⁷ A new Toaster was chosen and the Poe House and Westminster Hall and Burying Ground rejuvenated and expanded the tradition, creating, among other related Poe celebration events, an additional Toaster visit session at an earlier hour for the Toaster's younger fans to enjoy.¹³⁸

Although the Poe Toaster is one of the first examples of legend tripping many people in the Baltimore area would cite, some could argue that it is not example of legend tripping at all. The curated and orchestrated events and promotions now attached to Poe's birthday may lead some to consider it a tourism display not a legend trip. Additionally, in view of the fact that the general public is not able to participate in anything more than an observational capacity, that is to say there are no rituals for the visitors to perform it doesn't meet the basic description of legend tripping.

However, I argue that the Poe gravesite is an example of a legend trip destination, albeit one that involves essentially harmless ostension as referenced in this chapter in relation to Halloween traditions. In the Poe Toaster tradition there are ostensive elements on two levels: on the level of the Toaster, who drinks the toast and leaves the roses and cognac, and on the level of the observers, who visit the site on a particular night (of Poe's birthday). Even if no supernatural or uncanny event

¹³⁶ Chris Kaltenbach, "Nevermore? On the 202nd Anniversary of Writer's Birth, the Poe Toaster Is Again a No-Show, and the Six-Decade Tradition May Be Coming to an End," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 20, 2011, sec. Features.

¹³⁷ Kelley Quinn, "The Mysterious 'Poe Toaster' to Return," *The Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 2015, sec. A And E.

¹³⁸ Jerome.

occurs, witnessing the time-honored tradition of a mysterious figure performing his or her own rituals with such drama and flair is most certainly an extraordinary event. The Poe gravesite and Poe Toaster tradition is an excellent example of a legend performance tradition that evolved organically over time. Given the site's composition (surrounded by a brick and iron fence), location (at a busy downtown intersection), and the predictable and infrequent nature of the events (every year on January 19), site stewards were able to steer these occurrences into a planned event that is enjoyed by a wider audience.

Conclusion

Legend tripping is primarily a recreational activity that appeals to those with an interest in place-based narratives that present the possibility of extraordinary or supernatural experiences. Legend trips require a legend with an identifiable location and an action or actions, the performance of which are intended to provoke an extraordinary or supernatural event. Legend trippers comprise a folk group or culture who are linked through shared interest in stories that promise the potential for extraordinary experience and who physically engage in behaviors to encourage the event.

Legends are shared by those wishing to educate and entertain, and also by those who seek to promote. As discussed in Chapter II, the methods by which legends are shared vary, though notably websites, podcasts and other electronic and other media do sometimes target legend tripping directly. The seemingly boundary-less structure of the Internet means that these legends can be transferred to those well outside the local legend area with greater ease.

Ostension, the term used to describe the specific actions that legend trippers perform in an effort to reenact the story, can take many forms. The relevance of these activities in terms of historic preservation is that the actions are often undertaken at the sites of historic resources. And while flashing lights and honking horns are unlikely to cause physical harm, other activities, including

those involving automobiles and those undertaken by the legend trippers themselves as they wait for their reward, can cause real harm to these places. I discuss potential impacts of legend trippers on historic places in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV: RISKS TO HISTORIC PLACES

“Legend tripping is why we can’t have nice things.”

--The Dead History Podcast, Episode 5: The Nunnery

As discussed in the previous chapter, legend tripping is primarily a recreational activity that participants consider an opportunity to test reality and rebel against adult rules. There is a growing body of research into how legend tripping works, who engages in legend tripping and why it persists as a relevant activity decade after decade. These studies focus mainly on the people, performances, and social dynamics of legend tripping. However, the sometimes significant impacts of these trips and the associated behaviors of legend trippers on the places targeted is largely missing from contemporary research.

The practice and impacts of legend tripping fall on a spectrum. Some sites may encounter persistent legend trip visits resulting in significant damage, while others may only face occasional visits with little or no damage. The variations in effects and the frequency with which legend trips occur mean that site stewards can likewise employ a spectrum of approaches to address the issues they face. In this chapter I will discuss the legend tripping impacts I have located in the scholarship and discussed with site stewards at the sites used as illuminators for this study. It is worth noting that identification of legend tripping sites is not a reliably straight forward endeavor. While references to

legend tripping can be found online and in printed material available to and shared among potential participants and other interested parties, it is mostly an academic term that often site stewards have never heard. Several of the contacts I spoke with at the illuminator sites were happy to finally have a name for the occurrences at their sites. Identification of legend trip sites is also complicated by the fact that many site stewards, for a variety of reasons, do not currently want to publicize or call attention to the fact that this activity happens at their site. This is to say, in addition to the gap in research about impacts to legend trip destinations, it is also difficult generally to locate information about impacts to legend trip destinations as such either because stewards aren't aware how what they are experiencing may differ from general vandalism, or they don't know what to call the practice that results in the impacts they experience.

This chapter will explore the frequent connections between historic places and legend tripping and discuss some of the material impacts that occur some historic places (see fig. 11). This chapter will also discuss how risks and impacts are sometimes addressed by site owners and caretakers, and the importance of understanding the potential issues beyond the physical effects. Finally, this chapter will explore how these issues manifest at two legend tripping destinations.

Black Aggie	Legend: Statue comes to life; eyes turn red; causes miscarriages
	Impacts: Graffiti, leaving tokens, litter, damage to other resources
Hatch's Camp	Legend: Promiscuous nuns, drowned babies, hell hounds
	Impacts: Damage and theft of historic materials, graffiti, fires
Jericho Covered Bridge	Legend: Ghosts of persons hanged on bridge, burned girl/woman
	Impacts: Rubber tire marks on bridge, tagging and other graffiti
Poe Toaster	Legend: Mysterious figure appears each January 19
	Impacts: Increased traffic at site

Figure 11. Summary of how the illuminator sites reflect the intersection of folklore and historic preservation.¹³⁹ (The impacts for the Black Aggie statue are those experienced prior to her removal from Druid Ridge.)

The Historic Places where Legend Trips Occur

Legend tripping can occur at any location where the required elements converge: a legend with the potential for personal experience with the uncanny or supernatural and an appropriate place to test the legend. Legend trips often seem to occur at sites of older buildings and structure, though. As discussed in the preceding chapters, old places convey a sense of history and continuity in ways that contemporary construction generally cannot. Historic places are often distinctive and mysterious, in a “not-of-this-time” way. But because the cumulative effects of legend tripping can be such

¹³⁹ It is beyond the scope of this thesis treatise to closely analyze additional sites. Such a survey could be undertaken in future studies.

that a historic place may be seriously damaged, it is important that site owners and stewards understand the factors that make their site so alluring to legend trippers.

Connections established through legends with real historic places, whether old buildings, cemeteries, cultural sites or others, incite our imaginations and reinforce our concept of locations where supernatural events occur. Given its age – or appearance of age – a historic place, more so than a contemporary one, can serve in the role of the “ruins” needed as an appropriate setting for stories of the supernatural and extraordinary.¹⁴⁰ In other words, legend trippers may prioritize the right kind of location over the right actual location of a legend, so if a historic place has the right atmosphere and aesthetic, it will serve as an appropriate legend trip destination.

It is easy to see how a place shrouded in dense woods, that looks derelict and uncared for, conveys the necessary overtones of potential for uncanny events. But what makes the identification and management of places subject to legend tripping behaviors challenging is that legends can be generated about places that have no existing story or legend.¹⁴¹ Often, just the appropriate appearance, through setting and condition, suggests the liminality of a space that should have a legend and so one is created. These new legends may develop as speculation about the cause of the site’s current condition if it is abandoned or damaged.¹⁴² Chapter II discussed Manning’s application of affordance theory to identification of settings suitable for potential extraordinary and supernatural occurrences. In some cases, just looking the part – affording the possibility for extraordinary events, is enough to

¹⁴⁰ Manning, “No Ruins. No Ghosts.”

¹⁴¹ Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*. Brunvand refers to legends attached to locations because they look like places of legend as “proto-legends.”

¹⁴² Texts on Hatch’s Camp and St. Mary’s College both address this, in conjunction with an affiliation with a secretive, closed group such as the clergy, as the origins of the legends associated with these sites.

trigger at least some initial legend trips. And sometimes, a place that shares the key features of an actual legend trip destination can be mistaken or stand in for the actual place tied to the legend.¹⁴³ As Ellis noted, “at night, after a few beers and joints, doubtless any old house, bridge or graveyard can be the ‘right’ one.”¹⁴⁴

For a site to be appropriate for legend tripping, it needs to manifest the proper mysterious air and sense of potential. Folklorist Lynne McNeill visited Hatch’s Camp, one of the legend tripping destinations discussed in this thesis, and said of the feeling generated by the site: “...its abandoned buildings, made of stone and wood, spoke to long ago habitation at the same time that they clearly signaled current neglect. The sense that the space was meant to be inhabited gave me the eerie feeling that perhaps it still was, even though I didn’t experience anything especially strange.”¹⁴⁵ Ultimately, regardless of whether the connection between legend and place is based on fact or fantasy, the potential physical outcomes are real and sometimes significant.

Legend Tripping Impacts

The effects of the performative elements enacted during legend tripping can be direct in the form of physical damage and also indirect in the form of aural effects (honking a car horn), temporary proximity (sitting or standing in a particular spot), and visual in the form of flashing lights. Sometimes, the act of visiting the site in itself is the performance because the entry point to the leg-

¹⁴³ Holly and Cordy, 336.

¹⁴⁴ Ellis, “Legend Tripping in Ohio,” 65.

¹⁴⁵ Lynne S. McNeill, “Living Legends,” in *Legend Tripping: A Contemporary Legend Casebook*, ed. Elizabeth Tucker and Lynne McNeill (University Press of Colorado, 2018), 208.

end is simply being there. Regardless of the ostensive actions dictated by the legend, other contemporaneous activities are typically performed by legend tripmates. Attendant behaviors may not be considered separate from legend tripping activities in all cases, but they can perhaps be viewed as “ad-hoc” performances meant to enhance the specific actions identified in the legend.

Studies of legend tripping often do refer to the impacts on the targeted locations, but generally these are mentioned in passing, as incidental to the legend trip itself. This section includes descriptions and examples, including those gleaned from articles by several prominent legend trip scholars, of types of impacts to historic places. Again, it is important to note that the severity and frequency of these impacts is different between legend trip destinations.

Common Impacts: Collateral Damage and Unintended Consequences

Most ostensive behaviors intended to elicit a supernatural or extraordinary event are unlikely to leave a mark on the landscape. Nevertheless, places that are targeted by legend trippers often bear the imprint of these visits. My research only identified one article that focused specifically on analysis of the impacts of legend tripping on historic places.¹⁴⁶ However, many sources contained general references to vandalism and defacing of physical features of the site as side effects of legend tripping.¹⁴⁷ For this section I reviewed the legend tripping literature to highlight instances where impacts

¹⁴⁶ See: James L. Cooper, “Intended and Unintended Design Uses of Open Spandrel Reinforced Concrete Arches,” *Historic Bridge Bulletin* 8, no. 2 (September 2021): 7. In an article that opens with a discussion of open spandrel reinforced concrete arches used in railway construction, Cooper closes with a discussion of the Avon and Danville bridges (the famous “Haunted Bridges” in Dégh’s seminal work) and how they are now used for more than moving freight by rail. He discusses the legends associated with the bridges, the ways legend trippers move in and through the structures, and the “artwork” they leave behind.

¹⁴⁷ Bird, “Playing with Fear”; Gary Alan Fine and Jeffrey Victor, “Satanic Tourism: Adolescent Dabblers and Identity Work,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 1 (1994): 70–72; Gabbert, “Legend Quests and the Curious Case of St. Ann’s Retreat.”

on place are discussed, however lightly, to draw connections with the behaviors of legend trippers and the impacts to place.

Graffiti. As referenced here, graffiti means marking a structure or surrounding resources either on the surface using paint (usually spray paint) or markers, or by carving or etching into the structure material. Though in most cases the inscriptions are unrelated to the legend trip, graffiti is a common occurrence at legend trip destinations.¹⁴⁸ Names, dates, alleged occult-related graffiti (pentagrams, “666,” etc.) and other symbols and drawings are often applied at legend trip sites (see fig. 12).¹⁴⁹ Several legend tripping articles note the presence of graffiti, without providing detail regarding the content of the inscriptions.¹⁵⁰ Removing graffiti can be a complex and delicate process. The NPS published *Preservation Brief 38: Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry* to aid site stewards in selecting appropriate approaches for various masonry surfaces based on the type of paint or ink.¹⁵¹ Graffiti on other materials may be equally or more difficult to remediate.

¹⁴⁸ Ellis, “Legend-Trips and Satanism,” 282.

¹⁴⁹ Ellis, “Legend-Trips and Satanism.”

¹⁵⁰ Fine and Victor, “Satanic Tourism,” 71; Ellis, “Legend Tripping in Ohio,” 64.

¹⁵¹ U.S. National Park Service, *Preservation Brief 38: Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry*, vol. 38 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995).



Figure 12. Images of tagging on Jericho Covered Bridge circa 2013. [Photograph courtesy of Rick Decker]

Physical damage and defacing of surfaces. Another common result of legend tripping is damage to the physical or material aspects of the site. The ostensive actions in some of the Jericho Covered Bridge legends require accelerating a car rapidly at the entrance to the bridge. While the manifestation of ghostly figures said to result from such action is unconfirmed, what has been confirmed is the presence of rubber tire marks on the bridge deck (see fig. 13). In cemetery settings, gravestones are often found toppled, damaged or even removed.¹⁵² As discussed throughout this thesis, the Black Aggie statue is a prime example of the removal of a family grave monument to alleviate the impacts of legend tripping. Claims that no grass grows on a gravesite associated with a legend, as was the case for the Black Aggie statue, is more likely the result of repeated trampling of the

¹⁵² Ellis, “Legend Tripping in Ohio”; Ellis, “Legend-Trips and Satanism”; Holly and Cordy, “What’s in a Coin?”

ground by late night visitors.¹⁵³ Evidence of camp- and bon-fires mark many legend tripping spots.¹⁵⁴

The dangers of fire at many historic places cannot be overstated.

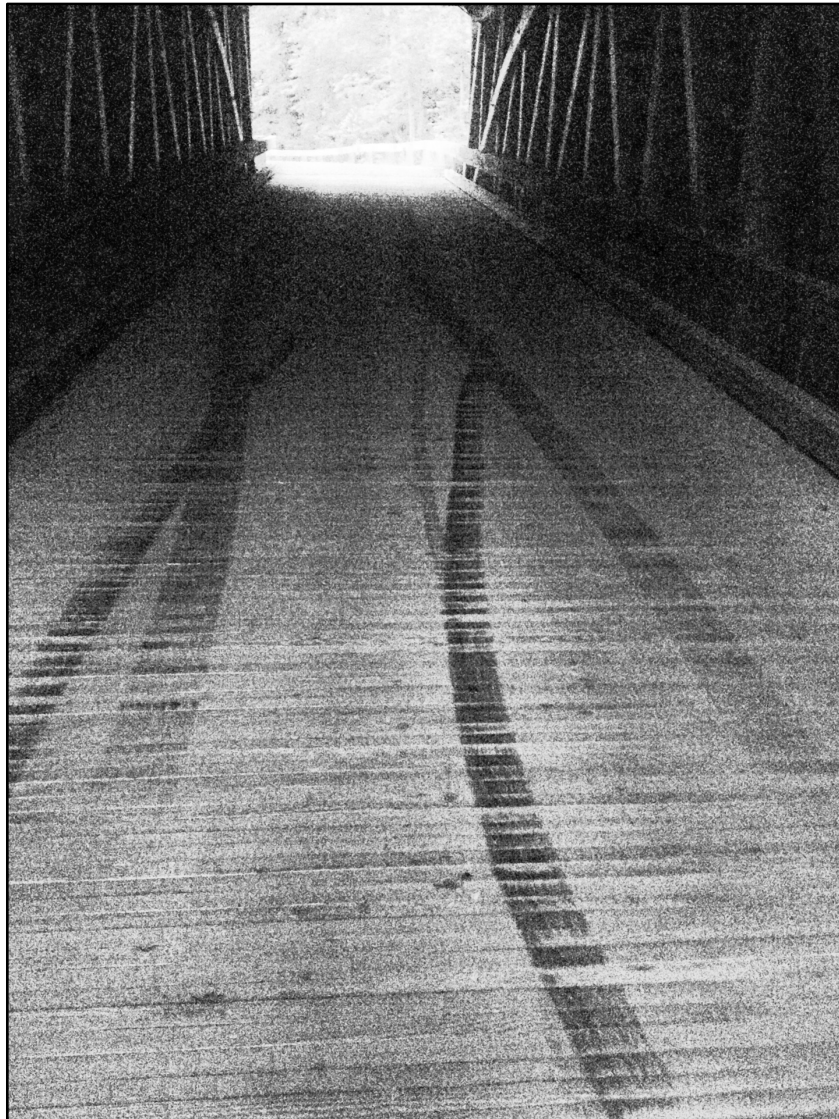


Figure 13. Skid marks on the deck of Jericho Covered Bridge, Kingsville, Maryland (enhanced for clarity). [Photograph courtesy of Rick Decker]

¹⁵³ Holly and Cordy, 342.

¹⁵⁴ Ellis, “Legend Tripping in Ohio,” 65.

Tokens. Similar to those shown in the image of Divine's headstone in the first chapter of this thesis, objects are often left behind at legend trip locations. In their review of the material culture of legend tripping, Donald Holly and Casey Cordy described finding "melted candles, remnants of firecrackers, beer bottles and caps, matchbooks and lighters, flowers, beads, a plastic apple, a plastic bird, plastic jewelry, batteries, sea shells, a bundle of herbs, a black cutout of an angel, and most frequently coins..."¹⁵⁵ While stories tell that the coins are in exchange for taking grave dirt, the practice of leaving coins on a headstone is not limited to legend tripping.¹⁵⁶ Often coins left on the headstone of a deceased soldier, especially those left by other soldiers, have a specific meaning depending on denomination, and represent the nature of the visitor's relationship with the deceased.¹⁵⁷ While leaving coins and other items does not necessarily damage the site physically, it requires resources to occasionally clean and restore the area. And if the tokens were not left by legend trippers they could symbolize a spiritual or other personal belief, and to remove the coins would be to interfere with those beliefs. Figure 14 shows coins left at the Booth family grave in Green Mount Cemetery, in Baltimore. Maryland.

¹⁵⁵ Holly and Cordy, 339.

¹⁵⁶ Holly and Cordy.

¹⁵⁷ Rick Kreiberg, "Coins on a Headstone," May 13, 2021, <https://veteransaffinity.org/blog-post/coins-on-a-headstone/>.



Figure 14. Coins left by visitors to the Booth family grave in Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore, Maryland. [Photograph courtesy of Carla Kennedy]

Litter. Several studies of legend tripping refer to litter left at the site. In their study of material effects of legend tripping, Holly and Cordy note finding “pornographic magazines, black knit hats, guitar picks, broken bottles, beer cans and drug paraphernalia,” in addition to candles, lighters, flowers and beer bottle caps.¹⁵⁸ By no means is littering limited or exclusive to legend tripping and it is generally not considered an ostensive action identified in a legend. But like some of the other ancillary legend trip behaviors listed here, it impacts the landscape. In addition to the widely accepted environmental impacts, littering is problematic in that if left unaddressed it will accumulate. Clearing the litter time after time requires monitoring and resources that some sites may not have to dedicate to such efforts. In addition to leaving the site looking uncared for, litter left unaddressed may also affect the sense of place for visitors who value a site in other contexts.

¹⁵⁸ Holly and Cordy, 343.

The descriptions of place impacts in the legend tripping literature generally describes them through recital of the evidence observed at the site during a particular visit. What isn't conveyed, even in the articles that touch more heavily on impacts to places, is the idea that impacts add up – legend trip after legend trip – year after year. In some cases, site stewards may not have the resources (time, money, manpower) to complete the same clean-up tasks over and over, while at the same time allowing effects to accumulate will make the issues more difficult to remediate and may give the appearance that a place is abandoned, unmonitored and uncared for. Regardless of whether the impacts are immediately remediated, the effects of legend tripping are cumulative. In places where the impacts are left unaddressed, the material evidence of legend tripping can alter the feeling and atmosphere over time, potentially changing the sense of place for those familiar with the site apart from legend tripping.

Legend Trippers, Trespassers and Vandals

Legend tripping, by and large, often involves an act of trespassing. Rebellion is doubtless one of the components that makes legend tripping so exciting, though owners and stewards of the historic places visited generally take a dim view of it. The legend tripper's participation in ostensive behaviors is often accompanied by partying and rowdy behavior, which can include wanton disregard for the physical location of the legend trip.¹⁵⁹ Given the impacts discussed above, what Ellis refers to as “antisocial acts,” it is evident that often there is ultimately little to no distinction between the impacts of legend tripping and what most people consider outright vandalism.¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, many

¹⁵⁹ Bird, “Playing with Fear,” 121.

¹⁶⁰ Bill Ellis, “Death by Folklore: Ostension, Contemporary Legend, and Murder,” *Western Folklore* 48, no. 3 (July 1989): 202.

articles that discuss legend tripping specifically use the term vandalism, which conveys judgement of the acts as deliberately destructive.¹⁶¹

Because legend trips are so frequently connected with vandalism, it is unsurprising that owners and stewards of legend trip destinations would consider them one and the same. The reality is, in the light of day, it is nearly impossible to tell what the motivation was for the destruction. It's often difficult to separate legend tripping from vandalism as, in viewing the material after-effects, it is impossible to decipher meaning behind the actions.¹⁶²

Addressing the Consequences

Historic places subject to legend tripping activities can employ a number of approaches to mitigate the effects. Insight into how other sites manage the effects of legend tripping can offer some suggestions to site stewards wondering how to approach impacts at their sites. This section will review some of the strategies employed at some historic places in response to legend tripping impacts, while also outlining potential consequences beyond physical damage. As previously noted, the ways that site owners and stewards opt to address the impacts of actual and potential legend tripping are varied. The ubiquitous “No Trespassing” and other signs intended to deter unauthorized access are one approach, but owners and stewards of sites associated with legend tripping have employed other approaches to curtail the impacts.

¹⁶¹ Ellis, “Death by Folklore”; Ellis, “Legend-Trips and Satanism”; Holly and Cordy, “What’s in a Coin?”; Bird, “Playing with Fear.”

¹⁶² Holly and Cordy, 336.

How Some Sites Handle Impacts of Legend Tripping

One direct way of addressing the impacts of legend tripping is to clean up and rectify them as quickly as possible, on the basis that allowing graffiti and other damage to remain conveys the message that no one cares what happens to the site and that further damage is not likely to cause concern or result in penalty.¹⁶³ However, sometimes the attraction of the legend is too strong and the visits from legend trippers, along with the legend tripping impacts, continue. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to say to what extent immediately removing the evidence of prior legend trips reduces the frequency or intensity of later trips. As discussed in the next section, the caretakers of Jericho Covered Bridge have for many years remediated all impacts of vandalism and or legend trippers as quickly as possible, an approach which keeps the historic place presentable to travelers and visitors to the Historic Jerusalem Mill Village. This approach has not eliminated legend trips to the site.¹⁶⁴

Bright outdoor lights are often considered an effective strategy to curb unauthorized nighttime access. Fixed-on lights or even motion activated lights can serve as a legend trip mood killer, making trips to the site somewhat pointless. While a flood of bright light does make it difficult to maintain an eerie aura of spooky possibility, not all historic places have the resources or are in a location to employ this approach. Conceivably, some historic places may not have accessible electric service and others that do may not have the funds required to install and service the lights. The bright lights themselves may also be fair game for vandalism, which would then require replacement

¹⁶³ George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," *The Atlantic*, March 1982, 4. This strategy echoes some of the sentiments in the Broken Windows policing program. Dating to the early 1980s, this program presumed a link between disorder and crime and asserted that "if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, all of the rest of the windows will soon be broken," based on the idea that "one unrepaired window is a signal that no-one cares and so breaking more windows costs nothing."

¹⁶⁴ Decker.

costs or a write-off of the initial set up.¹⁶⁵ Not to mention the fact, that such lights contribute to light pollution and may otherwise impact with neighboring properties

The Patapsco Female Institute, located in Ellicott City, Maryland opted for a solution to prevent legend trippers from gaining access to the site in the first place – fencing around the perimeter of the property (see fig. 15). The Female Institute comprises the stabilized remains of a nineteenth century girls’ school that is now used as an event space for weddings, theatrical performances and other public and private events. This site was included on the local “Mt. Misery Ghost Tour,” during which participants stand outside of the fence as the guide points up the hill to the shadowy ruins and relates several legends associated with the school including several paranormal sightings. The fence, however, effectively prevented the tour group from advancing any closer. As it encircles the entire property, it is therefore likely an effective means of preventing legend trips. However, Not all sites have the financial resources required to undertake an expensive and labor intensive project such as installing appropriate fencing around a large area. And, even if caretakers can afford to surround a historic place with a fence, they must give careful consideration to potential unintended consequences; that is, the other people (non-legend trippers) who may also be prevented from accessing the site for other reasons.

¹⁶⁵ Holly and Cordy, 343.



Figure 15. An aluminum fence that surrounds the Patapsco Female Institute in Ellicott City, Maryland helps keep uninvited guests away. [Amy Weber; November 20, 2021]

Security cameras are another option available to historic places with sufficient financial and technical resources. Some sites, including Hatch's Camp and Jericho Covered Bridge, employ such technology to obtain images of faces, license plates and other unique data points which can be used to identify trespassers. These sites and their strategies are discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter. Legend trippers, if identified, are vulnerable to criminal and potentially civil charges. Cameras may not be a viable solution in every case, though. The Physical landscape and layout of the site and sustainable power sources are two factors to consider.

In extreme cases, persistent legend tripping behaviors and vandalism at a historic place could result in the ultimate dismantling or demolition of the site. The Black Aggie legend previously discussed an example of this. After decades of damage not only to the Black Aggie statue but also surrounding headstones, monuments and statues, the Agnus family decided to donate the statue to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., leaving only the empty plinth at the family plot in

Druid Ridge Cemetery.¹⁶⁶ Holly and Cordy referenced a similar ultimate act of grave dismantling. Discussing the gravesite of rumored vampire Nellie Vaughn in Rhode Island, they described how her tombstone was knocked over and vandalized so many times that it was consequently removed from the graveyard and hidden away to discourage anyone from coming to look for it.¹⁶⁷ As discussed, the decision to remove or relocate the grave marker of a family's loved one should be considered carefully and decisions should be made in concert with the family's descendants.

Many factors contribute to the identification and implementation of appropriate means to mitigate damage from legend trippers. Size of the site, composition and size of the structure(s), and access to financial and labor resources are all factors that must be considered. However, potential impacts on use and enjoyment of the site by others, as well as any groups with spiritual or cultural ties to a place should also be considered in order to arrive at a reasonable and feasible approach.

Beyond the Material

Legend tripping repercussions can extend beyond physical impacts to the site. While the physical effects on a site are the primary focus of this project, it is important that site owners and stewards be aware of the potential for further-reaching consequences. Site stewards can risk interfering with cultural and spiritual belief systems and face potential reputational and community relations risks. They can even face potential legal liability for harm that befalls legend trippers. The occurrence of any of these may require access to and management of additional resources, including financial resources, which could impact the historic place's overall ability to address the physical impacts or even maintain day to day operations.

¹⁶⁶ Okonowicz, *Haunted Maryland*.

¹⁶⁷ Holly and Cordy, 343.

Again, as they relate to grave markers and sites of cultural and spiritual practices, the potential risks are elevated. People for whom these sites are sacred are likely to be distressed and offended by the litter, graffiti, and other damage to the site. Recurring legend trips to historic places with that result in significant impacts can cause the removal of a marker, a solution that should not be undertaken lightly. Removing or sequestering a revered object so that one group (legend trippers, in this case) can't gain access also prevents access by others.

Another concern is that the remnants of legend tripping can be misunderstood as evidence of Satanism or other occult activity. Legend trippers who create crudely constructed “altars,” painted pentagrams or other occult symbols, and engage in animal “sacrifices” (which often turn out to be repurposed roadkill) can be interpreted as proof of cults and satanic rituals.¹⁶⁸ Such misinterpretation has led to confusion and panic in some communities.¹⁶⁹ Ellis has written several articles on situations where effects of legend tripping have been misconstrued by the community and local officials, and mistaken for evidence of devil worship, inciting alarm and panic.¹⁷⁰

There could also be an element of reputational risk to a historic place resulting from on-going legend trip effects. Properties that are associated with threats, risks or violations of community expectations (whether from supernatural forces or human actions) can become what is known as a stigmatized property.¹⁷¹ Certainly, some people may be attracted to stigmatized sites, but often stigmatized properties can be more difficult to sell. Once a historic place becomes stigmatized, visits to

¹⁶⁸ Ellis, “Death by Folklore.”

¹⁶⁹ Ellis, “Death by Folklore”; Ellis, “Legend-Trips and Satanism”; Fine and Victor, “Satanic Tourism.”

¹⁷⁰ Ellis, “Legend-Trips and Satanism”; Ellis, “Death by Folklore.”

¹⁷¹ István Hajnal, “Evaluation of Stigmatized Properties,” *Organization, Technology and Management in Construction: An International Journal* 9, no. 1 (December 20, 2017): 1615–26, <https://doi.org/10.1515/otmcj-2016-0025>.

the sites may decline or cease, legend tripping could increase, and if the property is problematic enough in the eyes of the community, may result in calls for demolition.

Finally, the risk of physical injury to legend trippers is one area that should be critical for owners and stewards. The law is complex and depending on the circumstances of the case, legend trippers injured while on the property could take legal action against the owner or steward of the historic place. One example of potential liability for legend tripper injury is the legal concept of attractive nuisance. The attractive nuisance doctrine is a principle under which a person who maintains a dangerous feature or condition that is so interesting and alluring to young children that it attracts them to the property must exercise reasonable care to protect children from its dangers or be held liable if the child gets injured, even if the “child trespasses or was otherwise at fault.”¹⁷² If the circumstances of the incident and the injured legend tripper meet certain standards, they could have standing to pursue legal action against the owner or steward of the site.

Legal action could also arise in the event of confrontation between legend trippers and a site steward or representative. In the Hatch’s Camp example, caretakers physically restrained approximately thirty-eight legend trippers in one night. Despite the fact that the legend trippers were initially charged with trespassing, those charges were dropped and caretakers were later charged with assault.¹⁷³ This event divided the community, setting at odds proponents of private property rights and those who felt the teens engaged in a harmless area tradition.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Jack G. Handler, J.D., *Ballentine’s Law Dictionary*, Legal Assistant Edition (Delmar Publishers Inc. and Lawyers Cooperative Publishing, 1994).

¹⁷³ “3 Canyon Guards Each Face 6 Charges over Retreat Terror,” *Deseret News*, October 17, 1997, <https://www.deseret.com/1997/10/17/19340365/3-canyon-guards-each-face-6-charges-over-retreat-terror>.

¹⁷⁴ “Civic Brushfire · St. Anne’s Retreat · USU Digital Exhibits,” accessed April 13, 2022, <http://exhibits.lib.usu.edu/exhibits/show/stannesretreat/civicbrushfire>.

A similar confrontation occurred at the former St. Mary's College in Ellicott City, Maryland.¹⁷⁵ St. Mary's College was a former Catholic seminary that, similar to Hatch's Camp, was the subject of several legends tied to alleged suicide, murders and assaults, mysterious illness, and curses.¹⁷⁶ In this situation, a caretaker was charged with shooting a trespasser after a group attempting to access the site was ordered to leave the popular legend tripping destination and returned later that night bearing baseball bats. The caretaker fired his shotgun in the ensuing confrontation, striking one of the trespassers.¹⁷⁷ Although the Hatch's Camp and St. Mary's incidents are extreme and unusual cases, other potential legal or criminal matters may arise related to confrontations between legend trippers and those tasked with caring for and protecting a site. Ellis classifies the potential for this kind of conflict as a kind of proto-ostension, which involves the legend tripper's fear of a caretaker or other adult who pursues legend tripping trespassers in an attempt to hold them accountable or punish them as part of the legend trip experience.¹⁷⁸

The issues described above are not all inclusive and are not necessarily exclusive to historic places, but they can impact a site steward's ability to continue to care for a historic place long term. If impacts are left unaddressed, historic places can suffer extreme fates in an effort to curtail legend tripping activities. As an example, if reports are correct, the remains of the historic buildings at St.

¹⁷⁵ St. Mary's College (also known as Mount Clement and St. Clement's College) is a small campus in Ilchester, Ellicott City, Maryland. Dating to 1866 it was built for the Redemptorist Order and operated into the early 1970s. Once the campus became vacant, legend trippers began targeting the site. A 2004 addendum to the St. Mary's College documentation on file with the Maryland Historical Trust notes that the college and chapel burned on Halloween night, 1997, and that the ruins remained unsecured and a popular stop for parties and vandalism. <https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/media/PDF/Howard/HO-392.pdf>.

¹⁷⁶ Blank and Puglia.

¹⁷⁷ Jean Thompson, "Caretaker in Ilchester Is Charged in Shooting; Trespasser on Grounds of Former Seminary Is Critically Injured," *The Sun*, May 12, 1996, sec. 6C.

¹⁷⁸ Ellis, "Legend-Trips and Satanism." 284.

Mary's College were ultimately razed rather than rehabilitated after a fire and years of legend tripping impacts left the site beyond repair.

Caretaking and Ownership Structure

A key factor to consider when evaluating the risks to historic places and determining how to address them is to understand who is responsible for affected places, both in terms of financial and operational matters, physical maintenance, and decision making. Historic places impacted by legend tripping can fall under a number of ownership and caretaking arrangements, some of which may not be easily discernable. Sites can be privately owned and maintained, they can be owned by legal entities, they can be owned by a state or local municipality, or some combination of arrangements.

In some cases, like those of Jericho Covered Bridge and Hatch's Camp, there are special legal arrangements in place between the land owner and primary user and caretaker of the land. In a unique arrangement in the state of Maryland, The Friends of Jerusalem Mill (FOJM) has leased the entire historic Jerusalem Mill historic village, including the Jericho Covered Bridge, from the State for the last thirty-six years and take seriously their oath to "preserve, protect and restore" the buildings and structures in the village.¹⁷⁹ The FOJM strives to keep the village the same as it was when the mill's founding family moved away from the area.

At Hatch's Camp in Cache County, Utah, even though the structures are privately owned, the camp is located on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land. The USFS issues special-use authorizations (permits) for specific uses of their land to the owners of the improvements to the land (i.e., the structures). A special-use permit is generally required for someone to "occupy, use or build on Forest Service land," when the site is income producing (including if fees are charged), and if the activity

¹⁷⁹ Decker.

at the site will involve more than seventy five people.¹⁸⁰ Prospective buyers must work with the USFS and propose a use of the site that the USFS finds acceptable and for which they will agree to issue a permit.

These are just two examples of owner- and stewardship arrangements beyond a single owner and steward. Other arrangements may include hiring of management or caretaking companies, leases to for-profit and not-for profit businesses or organizations, and leases for residential use, among others. The salient point in this discussion is that all of these factors – the identity of the owner, the arrangements in place for care and use of the property, who is responsible for on-going up-keep, and so on - bears on the mitigation methods reasonably available to address the impacts of legend tripping.

Legend Trip Impact Examples

Jericho Covered Bridge

Jericho Covered Bridge is situated on a densely wooded stretch of Jericho Road, just south of the historic Jerusalem Mill village. It has suffered at the hands of legend trippers for decades. Vandalism and other damage from legend trippers is remediated as promptly as possible so the site does not convey the feeling that it is unmonitored and untended. The paint is kept fresh and the roadside underbrush is regularly trimmed back to maintain a neat appearance. While the bridge does not convey the image of “ruins,” given its location in the woods, in the dark of night the bridge likely takes on a frightening, mysterious air, conducive to accommodating potential encounters with the supernatural. The FOJM, caretakers of the site, have found nooses, graffiti in spray paint and

¹⁸⁰ “Special-Use Permit Application,” US Forest Service, February 1, 2016, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/contracts-commercial-permits/special-use-permit-application>.

marker, and carvings on the trusses (see fig. 16). On one night, legend trippers created a pentagram using salt and lit a small fire on the bridge deck.¹⁸¹



Figure 16. Graffiti on trusses of the Jericho Covered Bridge. [Photographs courtesy of Rick Decker]

The Jericho Bridge legend referenced in Chapter II that requires “burning out” at the entrance to the bridge often results in marring of the bridge decking also, as shown in figure 13.

FOJM, a not-for-profit entity, is responsible for all maintenance and upkeep of the structures, and does so entirely using admission fees, donations, and fundraisers.¹⁸² They endeavor to remediate remnants of legend tripping behavior as quickly as possible by repainting and repairing as necessary. As technology has advanced, they have been able to expand their mitigation toolbox to

¹⁸¹ Decker.

¹⁸² According to Decker, the Baltimore and Harford Counties are responsible, as applicable, for maintenance and upkeep of the roadways, including the bridge deck.

include the use of flame and graffiti resistant paint and installation of security cameras, all funded by the adjoining county governments (see fig. 17).¹⁸³



Figure 17. One of the four security camera installed around the Jericho Covered Bridge. Decker claims images captured on these cameras have been used to successfully prosecute trespassers. [Amy Weber; January 23, 2022]

According to the FOJM, the images captured by the cameras have been used successfully to prosecute trespassers.¹⁸⁴ However, the addition of the security cameras and associated signage alerting visitors to their presence has only reduced incidents by about ten to twenty percent, far less than they hoped for.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Decker.

¹⁸⁴ Decker.

¹⁸⁵ Decker.

Hatch's Camp¹⁸⁶

Hatch's Camp, also known as St. Ann[e]'s Retreat and the Nunnery, comprises just over two and one half wooded acres in Logan Canyon, Utah. Originally built around 1915 as a recreational camp for wealthy area families, and later used as a retreat for the Catholic Dioceses of Salt Lake City, the site comprises twenty one buildings and structures, including several guest cabins, sheds and a pool.¹⁸⁷ Hatch's Camp has also endured decades of damage at the hands of legend trippers. Stemming from legends of pregnant nuns, drowned babies, and hellhounds, generations of young people have descended on the site to try to experience the supernatural.¹⁸⁸

Articles about the site reference damage from trespassers (legend trippers) in terms of vandals and vandalism, indicating less of a concern about the motivation for the violations, but at the same time referring to the associated legends.¹⁸⁹ A public Facebook page titled "The Nunnery – St. Anne's Retreat" shares descriptions and photographs of damage to the site. A post from July 6, 2016 references doors and windows damaged after the protective boards were pried open and graffiti, including a pentagram, drawn on the floor.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Hatch's Camp is also known as St. Ann's Retreat, Forest Hills, and Pine Glenn Cove. Hatch's Camp is used here because that is the name used in the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.

¹⁸⁷ Korral Broschinsky, *Hatch's Camp*, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*, Utah Division of State History, Office of Historic Preservation (2006), <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6j99w2n>.

¹⁸⁸ Gabbert, "Legend Quests and the Curious Case of St. Ann's Retreat."

¹⁸⁹ Steve Kent, "Hatching Plans: Logan Canyon's Most (in)Famous Cabins Up for Sale with High Hopes of Public Access," *Herald Journal*, March 8, 2021, https://www.hjnews.com/news/local/hatching-plans-logan-canyons-most-in-famous-cabins-up-for-sale-with-high-hopes-of/article_f3cdc043-c806-58bc-be88-80fd10b11599.html.

¹⁹⁰ "The Nunnery - St Anne's Retreat | Facebook," accessed February 27, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/thenunnerylogan>.

Beyond the physical effects to the historic buildings and structures, Hatch's Camp was the site of a truly terrifying incident in 1997 that resulted in criminal charges against caretakers of the site. That night, the armed caretakers rounded up approximately thirty-eight trespassers and physically restrained them in the empty swimming pool until police arrived (see fig. 18).¹⁹¹ In a controversial turn, the trespassers were later cleared and the caretakers were charged with felony assault stemming from their treatment of the legend trippers.¹⁹²



Figure 18. Pool and pool house at Hatch's Camp, spring 2006. ["Hatch's Camp," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, July 20, 2006]

¹⁹¹ Amy Macavinta, "St. Anne's Retreat Trespassing Persists," *The Herald Journal*, October 28, 2017, https://www.hjnews.com/allaccess/st-anne-s-retreat-trespassing-persists/article_ddf817d5-13b5-5eec-9d3c-b976a8bbf8bd.html.

¹⁹² Ryan Robb Oliver, "Trio Charged; Kids Off Hook," *Herald Journal*, October 17, 1997, <http://exhibits.lib.usu.edu/items/show/5738>.

Owners of Hatch's Camp have taken extreme steps to try to dissuade legend trippers and other unauthorized visitors.¹⁹³ The Nunnery – St. Anne's Retreat Facebook page shares publicly of ten amazingly clear images of trespassers caught on security cameras along with pleas to the public to aid in identification. The page claims that trespassers who have been identified have been successfully prosecuted in the past and future trespassers will continue to be held accountable.¹⁹⁴

The future of Hatch's Camp is uncertain. Currently, the site is vacant and the buildings are boarded over. Contemporary articles related to the status of the site make clear that the aim of all involved, including the USFS, is to end the legend tripping to the site permanently and to find a use for the property that the public can enjoy¹⁹⁵. In a newspaper interview in March 2021, Jennefer Parker with the U.S. Forest Service noted: "The Forest Service doesn't support or promote some of the folklore and rumors that surround Hatch's Camp.," Parker goes on to say that "every time we see some thing that is promoting that, we also see an uptick in vandalism."¹⁹⁶ The improvements to Hatch's Camp are for sale as of the time of this writing.

¹⁹³ Despite several attempts, I was unable to contact the current owner of the buildings and structures at Hatch's Camp. A Facebook page exists for the property but attempts to contact the page administrator have been unsuccessful. The last posts to the site date to 2020.

¹⁹⁴ See: <https://www.facebook.com/thenunnerylogan>. It is interesting to note that earlier posts (in the 2016 timeframe) illustrate the complex line between protecting and promoting a historic property. Scattered in with stills of trespassers and photos of damage, the page owners in some respects reinforce the legend tripping aspects of the site, by promoting an episode of the television show *Ghost Adventures* filmed at the site, and through posts that aim to gauge interest in public tours (for which the USFS declined to issue the necessary permits).

¹⁹⁵ Dan Bammes, "Cabins in Logan Canyon for Sale Along With Their Creepy Legends," KSLNewsRadio, March 11, 2021, <https://kslnnewsradio.com/?p=1944688>; Kent, "Hatching Plans: Logan Canyon's Most (in)Famous Cabins Up for Sale with High Hopes of Public Access."

¹⁹⁶ Kent, "Hatching Plans."

Conclusion

Legend trippers can target a variety of historic places in their quest to experience the extraordinary. There is no specific formula to ascertain which sites are at greater risk. Cemeteries, bridges, buildings, and camps are all fair game, though it is true that the atmosphere of a historic place, combined with and enhanced by its setting, is more alluring if it conveys the appropriate mood for uncanny potential. Historic places subject to legend tripping behavior include privately and publicly owned properties, with a range of caretaking arrangements that mean that not all places have the same level of resources available to address the impacts.

The ostensive actions undertaken by legend trippers to “activate” the legend are not necessarily harmful (i.e., engaging a car horn, flashing lights, sitting in a particular spot) however the ancillary behaviors multiple groups of legend trippers engage in during visit after visit to a site, as they hang-out and wait for things to happen, can have damaging and potentially severe consequences, including those beyond impacts to the material elements

It is clear that a number of factors play a role determining the means and methods available to combat the effects of legend tripping. Chapter V discusses why it is important for owners and stewards of historic places that are the target of legend trippers to recognize when legend tripping is the reason for the adverse effects they experience, provide recommendations for possible ways to address and remediate the effects, and suggest areas of additional study to further the understanding of how legend tripping impacts historic places.

CHAPTER V: TRIPPING FORWARD: CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

“History has depth, and time bestows value.”

Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place:
The Perspective of Experience*

The connections between story and place that result in legend tripping behavior are real. Real, too, are the impacts on some historic places resulting from the actions of legend trippers during their visits. If left unaddressed, such impacts are compounded and can ultimately result in serious, and in some cases permanent, physical harm to targeted historic places. Ability to recognize when physical effects are the result of legend trippers would benefit site stewards greatly, as the impacts may be of a nature and frequency not typically encountered at other historic places. Shifting the lens through which such impacts are viewed and understanding the motivation behind the activity will expand the collection of potential approaches that may be considered to offset the effect.

Learning to recognize the patterns that may indicate the occurrence of legend tripping provides site stewards insight into the interests and the participants likely engaging in the activities. They can then use this knowledge in their analysis of the impacts to their site to consider what role, if any, that information will play in their mitigation strategy. As stated previously, historic places impacted by legend tripping vary greatly, as do the frequency and severity of the impacts, and there are many ways the impacts can be addressed. The idea of acknowledging and incorporating the legend, and

engaging with legend trippers to any extent may seem counterintuitive, if not downright outlandish, to stewards of some historic places, but that option is one of several I propose be considered when creating a plan to address legend tripping impacts.

The goal of this disquisition is not to solve the problem of legend tripping impacts on historic places through recommendation of effective universal solutions, but rather to offer a framework for understanding legend tripping in a new way while suggesting a baseline for pragmatic solutions to the historic preservation related problems that legend tripping creates. To that end, this chapter will revisit the goals of historic preservation as they apply to historic sites that are the target of legend trippers, discuss suggested approaches for managing and mitigating the impacts of legend tripping, discuss how preservationists and folklorists might work together to consider, preserve and promote such sites, and make recommendations for further study of the elements of legend tripping and its impacts on historic places.

Goals of Preservation Restated

The practice of historic preservation aims to protect our historic and cultural resources for future generations so they may use and engage with these places to appreciate and learn about our past as we look to the future. Old places are important because they show where we come from and inform our self-perception, individually and as a community. Author, lawyer and preservationist Thompson Mayes notes, “feelings of continuity, memory, and identity from old places gives us a sense of who we are.”¹⁹⁷ Protecting and preserving historic places is critical to sustaining a material link with our past and learning for our future.

¹⁹⁷ Mayes, *Why Old Places Matter*.

Managing the Material

Maintaining and preserving historic structures can be challenging as well as rewarding. Challenges run the gamut from finding compatible replacement hardware for historic windows to finding tradespeople skilled in historic methods and materials. Stewards of historic places should be prepared to commit to put in the extra effort required to maintain the historic aspects of a place.

The U.S. Secretary of the Interior (SOI), who oversees the National Park Service (NPS), maintains its *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.¹⁹⁸ These guidelines outline the maintenance and treatment standards for historic structures which many local historic preservation ordinances in turn use as a basis for their historic property design guidelines. Other guidelines, in the form of Preservation Briefs, are published by the NPS and offer technical guidance for working with particular historic materials and structures, such as cast stone, steel windows, barns and bridges.

The SOI *Standards* promote four treatment options for historic structures and landscapes: restoration, rehabilitation, preservation, and reconstruction, and is a valuable technical resource for anyone working with historic structures. Qualified historic places can be eligible for financial preservation incentives. Although there is no requirement that the owner of a historic place actively maintain it to a certain standard, in order to take advantage of most historic preservation incentive programs, eligible historic places must be maintained to the SOI standards and possibly comply with additional specific requirements.

¹⁹⁸ “36 CFR Part 68 -- The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties,” accessed December 7, 2021, <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-I/part-68?toc=1>.

Impacts on Eligibility

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the nationwide template for local and state preservation programs. Listing in the NRHP is a two-pronged process in which a property is first evaluated against established criteria to determine significance within the NRHP framework. Criteria for significance generally are association with important historical events or people, examples of distinctive design and construction, and potential to yield important information “important in pre-history or history.”¹⁹⁹ Sites meeting one or more of the criteria are then evaluated against standards intended to ensure that the property has sufficient integrity. These standards include location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

As discussed in Chapter II, in National Register Bulletin 15 (NRB 15) the NPS defines the quality of “feeling” as “a property’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.”²⁰⁰ NRB 15 defines “setting” as “the physical environment of a historic property.”²⁰¹ Both legend tripping and the means employed to mitigate legend tripping impacts can affect these qualities. For example, legend trippers can impact the feeling of a site through littering, leaving tokens and applying graffiti (painted or etched/carved) and other modern markings. Design is another aspect of integrity that can be impacted. “Design” is defined as “the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure and style of a property.”²⁰² The aspect of design is typically associated with larger areas than an individual structure, such as landscapes and districts, and considers

¹⁹⁹ U.S. National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15*.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid..

overall arrangement of elements and themes present in a cohesive area. Legend tripping mitigation strategies can also impact certain aspects of integrity if the landscape itself is changed as part of the strategy chosen. Clearing trees to improve visibility and eliminate hiding places, and installing fences and large warning signs can negatively impact design, feeling, and setting. Selecting the right approach is a delicate balance, to be sure.

In short, historic places are priceless. Although it is possible to reconstruct a structure to approximate the original, that reconstruction cannot truly replace the original structure – the historic materials and workmanship, the traces of a long existence. A large factor in restoration, rehabilitation, preservation, and reconstruction of historic places is expense. For this reason, should the Jericho Covered Bridge be destroyed (by fire, for example) then it is unlikely it will be reconstructed.²⁰³ The state of Maryland spent 1.3 of the two million dollars it was allocated from bridge restoration funds allotted by Congress on the last restoration of Jericho Covered Bridge (see fig. 19).²⁰⁴ The restoration could not have been completed without the federal funds in combination with funds from the state and other fundraising efforts. Raising sufficient funds to reconstruct the bridge outright in the event of demolition, likely five or six million dollars, would be a herculean task.

²⁰³ Decker. Decker indicated that along with graffiti and tire skid marks found on the bridge decking, the Friends of Jerusalem Mill Village also found evidence of an attempted fire on the wood deck on at least one occasion.

²⁰⁴ Decker.



Figure 19. The Jericho Covered Bridge was the subject of an extensive restoration project in 2015/2016. [Photograph courtesy of mdcoveredbridges.com]

Stewards and preservationists engaged with historic places that experience damage from ongoing unauthorized visits should be able to examine evidence at a site, and conduct appropriate research and consultation to identify if the legend trippers may be the source of recurring issues. If legend tripping may be a factor, site stewards and preservation practitioners should work together to consider possible appropriate strategies that can be implemented to address the effects.

Recommended Practices

Several factors influence which approaches can be implemented at historic places to address legend tripping impacts. As discussed, sites vary widely in terms of location, property type, ownership structure, financial resources and other factors, so potential approaches to mitigation also vary widely. There are some proactive strategies, however, that sites can employ to appropriately assess their specific situation.

Variables to Consider

In order to determine whether legend tripping is the source of the impacts, site stewards should be familiar with the hallmarks of legend tripping. Some indications of legend tripping may be subtle, such as high foot traffic, evidence of nocturnal visits and unexpected attention from adolescents and young adults. As discussed in Chapter IV, more obvious signs of legend tripping can include graffiti, defacing of surfaces, leaving of tokens, and litter such as beer cans, alcohol bottles, and drug paraphernalia. In conjunction with assessing the above effects, if not already familiar with legends attached with the historic place, stewards should conduct initial research, including on-line searches and potentially consultation with a folklorist as a specialist in local legends, to determine whether legends with claims of potential for extraordinary experiences are associated with the site. In some situations, these may happen in reverse order; when a site steward is familiar with the legends they can use that information to inform a search for evidence of legend trippers visiting the historic place. If a site steward determines that legend tripping is the probable source of the impacts, then their next step is to determine what mitigation strategies might reasonably be implemented at their historic place. Such determination requires consideration of several factors, including property type, use, ownership structure, setting and resources. Figure 20 provides an overview of the aspects to consider in developing an approach.

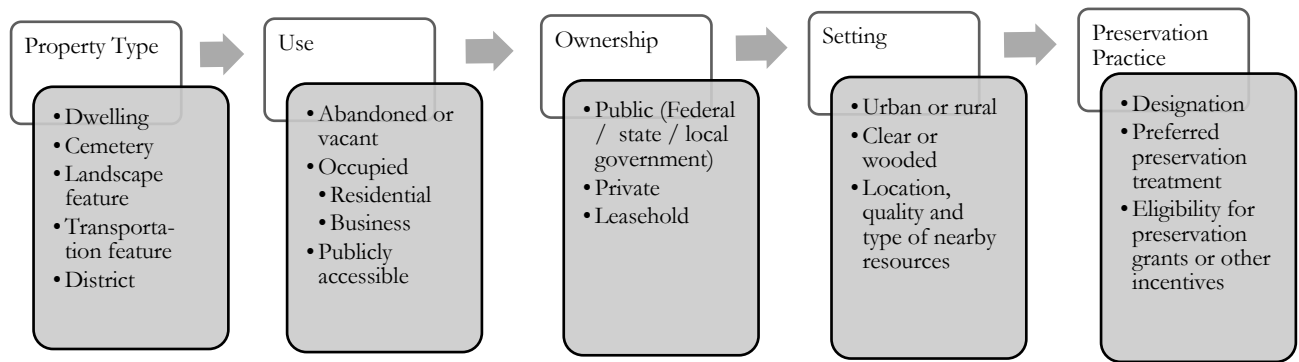


Figure 20: Variables for site stewards to consider when developing of a legend trip mitigation strategy.

Property type refers to the nature and characteristics of the historic property. Property types include cemeteries, transportation features (roads and bridges), structures (boats, sheds, barns), dwellings, institutional and commercial buildings, and statues or memorials, among others. Each of these present their own opportunities and challenges in terms of which mitigation approaches may be practical. While it may be reasonable, for example, to install a fence around a cemetery or dwelling, it may be less effective to install a fence around a bridge or portion of roadway.

Use of a historic property is another important consideration. Uses may be public, like transportation facilities, living history displays, parks, museums, or memorials. They may also be private, as in the case of residential dwellings and commercial buildings. Use of a property should be factored into the decision making process so as to make sure the strategies selected do not interfere with the ongoing safe operation, use and enjoyment of the property by the full spectrum of visitors. Site stewards should determine whether the impacts from legend tripping interfere with the primary use of the historic place as well as whether any mitigation strategies under consideration might interfere with use.

Ownership structure can be a factor in potential approaches to mitigation. Ownership structure will dictate who is responsible for making decisions about the appropriate approach, as well as

who is responsible for the associated costs. Ownership structure can also impact what resources are available. Take, for example, Jericho Covered Bridge. As a structure jointly owned by Baltimore and Harford counties in Maryland, those entities provide supplies to remediate legend tripping impacts and contributed to installation of the security cameras outside and inside the bridge structure.²⁰⁵ Under their lease arrangement with the State of Maryland, the FOJM do much of the repair and repainting of the bridge themselves.

The setting of a historic place is another feature that can vary greatly among historic places that are legend trip destinations. The setting can be limited to a single residential type area, spread out over a large area as in a district or corridor, wooded or clear, wooded or clear and any number of combinations of those and other features. As setting is one of the aspects of integrity for NRHP eligibility, it should be included in the consideration of potential solutions to ensure that the setting will not be negatively impacted. Resources are another factor that may determine what mitigation approaches are reasonable. Available staffing, budget, and access to appropriate tools and materials all play a role in determining what solutions can be reasonably implemented.

In determining how to address or remediate effects of legend tripping behavior, site stewards should also consider established preservation thought and practice, including approaches under the SOI's *Standards* and National Register Bulletin 15 titled "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," among other relevant guidance.²⁰⁶ As noted previously, the specific strategies imple-

²⁰⁵ Decker.

²⁰⁶ See: Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, 36, sec. 68, <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-I/part-68>; and National Register Criteria for Evaluation. U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, 36, sec. 60.4, <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-I/part-60/section-60.4>.

mented can have real and lasting effects on a historic place's eligibility to qualify for preservation incentives. Site stewards should collaborate with their local State Historic Preservation Office who can connect them with available programs, tools, organizations, as well as help develop a preservation plan as applicable to prioritize projects and resources.

One Size Does Not Fit All

As the variables discussed above suggest, there are no hard and fast rules or definitive best practices for mitigating the effects of legend tripping at a historic place. Depending on the property type and the financial and managerial resources available, several approaches to mitigate or contain damage may be available to some site stewards, while other sites may have few to no reasonable options. For example, the resources available to protect abandoned or private properties may differ greatly from those available to publicly owned sites eligible that take advantage of historic preservation incentives. Aside from the managerial and financial differences between historic places, other hurdles to a “cookie cutter” approach include variations in property type, size, use, and desired outcome of remediation.

If a site steward identifies legend tripping as the likely source of on-going negative impacts to the site, they must next determine a reasonable and realistic approach to managing the issue. A plan that involves remediating (cleaning-up and repairing) impacts after each incident won't necessarily help reduce the likelihood of future impacts. As discussed, Jericho Covered Bridge stands as a good example of this. The FOJM strive to remediate damage from legend trippers as quickly as possible, not allowing evidence to linger, however that process has not been successful in preventing subsequent visits and damage.²⁰⁷ Ultimately, remediation of individual events is likely not an effective

²⁰⁷ Decker.

long-term approach unless the impacts are infrequent or easily corrected. Site stewards should, however, take care to give adequate consideration to the full scope of the repercussions of the mitigation strategies they choose to employ. Though unintended, certain approaches may have consequences for a historic place beyond reducing potential damage from legend trippers. Historic places that are gated, fenced, locked, blocked and boarded cannot be enjoyed or appreciated by anyone.

Site stewards and preservationists should also recognize that there will be circumstances in which proactive mitigation may not be feasible. Factors like costs associated with the identified measures, inaccessibility, or disinterest on the part of the property owner or primary decision maker can directly affect probability of implementation of identified strategies. Ownership structure could also be a factor that prevents proactive mitigation. Conceivably, a site that encounters persistent, severe impacts and that is unable to implement an appropriate mitigation strategy could face destruction of the resource. In such situations, if the historic place is not already documented, steps should be taken to ensure that the site and its history are thoroughly recorded so that, in the worst-case scenario of demolition or destruction, a record of the site's history exists.

Taking a Hard Line Approach

One key consideration when determining the appropriate approach to mitigate legend tripping at a historic place is to consider whether implementation of the approach may have unintended effects on the property, surrounding resources, visitors, and site stewards. Site stewards should contemplate those situations where the cultural and spiritual beliefs of any person or group may be negatively impacted by the identified legend tripping mitigation strategy. One example may be to consider the impact on the family and ancestors of a person whose headstone or grave marker site stewards intend to remove to avoid having to reckon with repeated legend tripping impacts.

When determining whether to install fences, conspicuous signs, cameras, locks and other hard line approaches, site stewards must weigh the impacts to the site beyond the desired reduction in legend tripping activity. They must consider whether such approaches will limit the access of others (i.e., non-legend trippers) to the site or otherwise impact their ability to access and enjoy the resource. They should ask whether the security measures might interfere with the beliefs or customs of other groups and question what impacts the measures will have on the overall landscape and historic features of the site. Will they change the sense of place that makes the historic place important to others? Could mitigation strategies be implemented in a targeted fashion to minimize impacts? If, for example, most activity and damage occur on certain nights of the year, could enhanced security be implemented solely at those times?

Site stewards at certain historic places, including Hatch's Camp and Jericho Covered Bridge, feel that the negative impacts that occur at the site are problematic enough to take a hard line on trespassers and legend trippers by means of identification and prosecution (see fig. 21). Representatives at both locations support debunking of the legends in an effort to eliminate legend tripping to the sites. In both cases, they assert that the historic elements of the story have no basis in fact and that they cannot conceive of an arrangement where the legends can be employed in a beneficial way.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Decker.



Figure 21. Sign posted at Hatch's Camp in 2015 alerting potential legend trippers and others that the site is under surveillance and that trespassers will be prosecuted. [Photograph courtesy of Herald Journal News]

Based on the caretaking arrangement and the fact that the Jericho Covered Bridge is located within an engaged community that often alerts site stewards to the presence of potential legend trippers, they are often able to engage with their “visitors” in real time. Their strategy involves attempting to correct the misconceptions about the bridge’s history, a carload of visitors at a time if necessary, in the hope of dispelling the legends and, by extension, ending the legend tripping. In conjunction with this approach, they immediately remediate any physical impacts they are unable to prevent. The president of FOJM, acknowledges that this is an uphill battle. Once legends reach the Internet, there is no reasonable way to debunk every iteration of the legend online, and even if one were to try, such attempted negation of the legend may, in fact, increase the likelihood that legend trippers will feel the need to find out for themselves.

Other Strategies

Depending on the financial and labor resources site stewards have available, they may be able to consider some more creative strategies to address legend tripping. An oblique or unconventional approach may reduce legend tripping impacts while at the same time creating other benefits. Implementing new or enhanced caretaking relationships and considering legends and legend trippers in a different light are two paths to consider. Not all of the approaches below will be reasonable or applicable in all cases, but they may serve as starting points for site stewards to consider in developing a custom approach to dealing with legend tripping impacts, in a way that works best for their site.

Taking a Different Approach

This section will explore existing programs and incentives that, while not designed or specifically intended for the management or mitigation of legend tripping behaviors, can be employed by site stewards to address or prevent impacts of legend tripping. Historic designation of a site can influence the financial and other resources that might be available to a historic place. Not all eligible historic places are listed in the NRHP, but those that are can often take advantage of tax credits and other incentives available at the federal or local level, as applicable. It is important to note that other eligibility conditions may apply in such cases. For example, in order to be eligible for federal historic preservation tax credits, the property must be income producing and deemed to be a “certified historic structure,” which are those structures individually listed in the NRHP, or certified by the NPS as a contributing resource in a NRHP historic district or a certified state or local district.²⁰⁹ Site

²⁰⁹ “Tax Incentives—Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service,” accessed March 12, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>.

stewards should remember, though, that historic preservation grants and tax credits are typically on a per project basis requiring advance approval of work and adherence to the SOI *Standards*.²¹⁰ While they could be used in some cases to address past legend tripping impacts, the incentives mentioned here probably should not be considered a means of funding for on-going repairs to legend tripping damage.

Grants are another incentive that can provide needed funds to historic properties. Similar to the tax incentives, the site must meet certain eligibility requirements depending on the nature of the grant.²¹¹ Sometimes these are accompanied by a requirement that the site invest some level of matching funds. Grants are an interesting option to consider though, as such funds could conceivably be used to establish a program at the site that acknowledges or debunks the legend, or re-directs attention from the legends that spur the legend trips and toward other narratives associated with the site. I will explore this idea in more detail in the next section.

Some approaches to land and property management could be employed based on location, ownership and other factors, even if the intent of the program isn't necessarily to address impacts to a historic place directly. For example, some states, including Maryland, offer historic property curatorship programs. Under these programs, provided minimum requirements are met, individuals and for- and not-for-profit entities committed to historic preservation can apply to lease a state-owned

²¹⁰ "Tax Incentives."

²¹¹ For more on grants, see: "Grant Programs | National Trust for Historic Preservation," accessed March 14, 2022, <https://savingplaces.org/grants>; "Competitive Grants - Historic Preservation Fund (U.S. National Park Service)," accessed March 14, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/project-grants.htm>; "Heritage Fund Grants," Preservation Maryland, accessed March 14, 2022, <https://www.preservationmaryland.org/programs/heritage-fund-grants/application-guidelines-procedures/>.

historic property in exchange for restoration and maintenance of the structure.²¹² In the Resident Curatorship Program, individuals can lease a historic dwelling (individual houses and small farms) directly from the state of Maryland and, in exchange for investing an agreed amount in restoration, making the property available to the public periodically, and additional consideration, the individual can live in the house rent free for life. The arrangement for commercial ventures is similar, although because businesses are not legally allowed to benefit at the expense of the state, there is a rent component of these transactions.²¹³ A vacant, state owned historic place that is subject to legend tripping activity could be leased and occupied under such an arrangement, which could act as a deterrent to unauthorized visitors. Peter Morrill, Curator Program Manager with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, acknowledged that sites that are occupied sustain fewer impacts from trespassers and other visitors than those that are vacant.²¹⁴

Both Hatch's Camp and Jerusalem Mill Village, the location of the Jericho Covered Bridge, are on federal and state owned land, respectively. Similar arrangements allow the property owner (i.e., the federal or state government) to transfer caretaking responsibility to willing and interested parties. In the case of Jerusalem Mill, the FOJM are responsible for the preservation and maintenance of structures at the site including addressing the impacts of legend tripping. Provided the parties meet the requirements of the particular program, an arrangement such as this could be a means of arranging caretakers for otherwise uninhabited government owned properties. Ostensibly, this

²¹² "Resident Curatorship Program Policies," Maryland Department of Natural Resources, accessed March 14, 2022, <https://dnr.maryland.gov/land/Pages/default.aspx>.

²¹³ Peter Morrill, interview by author, via telephone, March 15, 2022.

²¹⁴ Morrill.

would function in much the same way as more traditional caretaking and lease arrangements, providing remote owners with on-site caretaking and day to day management of a site.

A Novel Suggestion

A truly innovative approach for historic places that are legend trip destinations would be to consider evaluating the site as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP). *National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties* defines a TCP as a historic place that is “eligible for inclusion in the NRHP because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in that community's history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community.”²¹⁵ As established in Chapter III, legend trippers comprise a folk group with a shared place attachment to legend trip sites, and shared interest in the legends and legend performance. In programs under the NRHP, culture generally means “the traditions, beliefs, practices, lifeways, arts, crafts, and social institutions of any community” which can apply at a local, tribal or national level.²¹⁶ As such, the community of legend trippers can be considered a “culture” for the purposes of a TCP. Legend tripping also meets the “traditional” aspect considered to mean “beliefs, customs, and practices of a living community of people that have been passed down through the generations, usually orally or through practice.”²¹⁷

²¹⁵ U.S. National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*, vol. 38 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990): 1.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

This approach is not likely to be embraced in all cases. In fact, resistance on the part of some site stewards, and also some preservation practitioners, would not be unexpected. It is not uncommon for folk beliefs in the possibility of the supernatural to be considered “objectively incorrect.”²¹⁸ Folklorist David Hufford suggests that scholars and professionals should not put less emphasis on beliefs in the possibility of the supernatural because they – the scholars and professionals – don’t believe they could be true, but rather that such beliefs should be treated to be as valid as those of other religious beliefs that are not provable.²¹⁹ Therefore, the beliefs of legend trippers in search of a chance to experience the extraordinary or supernatural, should be taken as seriously as the spiritual beliefs of other groups.

There are examples of legend trip communities that closely fit the customary application of the TCP concept. One example is the “ghost tracks” in San Antonio, Texas. Centered at a remote rail road crossing, the landscape forms what is known as a “gravity hill,” which is essentially an intricate optical illusion that makes it appear that an object, often a car, is drifting up hill.²²⁰ The legend associated with this particular gravity hill tells of a train colliding with a bus full of school children, and that it is the ghosts of these children who push vehicles up the hill and over the tracks, to save visitors from sharing their fate. For the Hispanic community in Texas, this place is, of course, a place of thrills and terror sought by most legend trippers, but it also serves as a place of pious won-

²¹⁸ David J. Hufford, “Traditions of Disbelief,” *New York Folklore* 8, no. 3 (1982): 47.

²¹⁹ Hufford, “Traditions of Disbelief.”

²²⁰ Bec Crew, “These Gravity-Defying Hills Are One of The Strangest Natural Phenomena We’ve Seen,” ScienceAlert, accessed February 14, 2022, <https://www.sciencealert.com/gravity-hills-physics-defying-optical-illusion-car-drifts-uphill>.

der with an opportunity to interact with the spirits of the innocent children. People travel long distances to visit the site and often participate as families and in multi-generational groups.²²¹ Considering that, “The traditional cultural significance of a historic property, then, is significance derived from the role the property plays in a community's historically rooted beliefs, customs, and practices,”²²² the community of legend trippers for a historic place, who practice their customs and traditions year after year, should be given as thorough a consideration as other, more commonly identified traditional cultures.

Can Legend Tripping be a Good Thing?

Site stewards should also consider whether it is possible for legend tripping to contribute to a historic place in a positive way. Changing the lens through which they view legend trippers could create new opportunities for visitor engagement with the site, along with the potential opportunity for new income streams. Regardless of whether a legend trip destination is ultimately designated as a TCP, there are cases in which legends associated with a site can be used to stimulate engagement with a historic place.

As previously discussed, legend tripping exists on a spectrum and not all legend trips result in significant physical damage to a historic site. In cases where impacts are infrequent or easily manageable, as well as in cases where a historic place is looking to engage with the community in a new way or engage with new community members, legends can be used as a point of participation. Acknowledgement of legend through interpretative signs or displays, or creation of events catering

²²¹ Carl Lindahl, “Ostensive Healing: Pilgrimage to the San Antonio Ghost Tracks,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 118, no. 468 (2005): 164–85.

²²² U.S. National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin* 38, 1.

to legend trippers can leverage the legend connection to the benefit of the historic place through incorporation and commodification of the legend as a routine element of the business.²²³ In this and similar ways, sites can acknowledge that, ultimately, the legend trippers' visits to the site are part of the site's larger history and allow the site to paint a clearer picture of the site's past.

One example of legend trip impacts integrated into a site involves a place-based legend of a different sort: Elvis Presley's Graceland. Many visitors leave their mark, quite literally, on the wall surrounding the Graceland estate in the form of notes and inscriptions. Although not officially sanctioned by site stewards, the fact that they allow the inscriptions to remain (unless "profane or irrelevant") and make adjustments to the site to provide visitors with easier access to the wall indicate that they have determined that these markings are part of the story of Graceland.²²⁴

If sufficient resources are available, site stewards could consider hosting events and tours tied to the legend, providing an authorized and controlled outlet for participants to engage in the testing of reality that may work to subvert legend tripping. Offering sanctioned visits in controlled setting removes the rebellion against rules that Ellis identifies as key points of legend tripping. It is likely that true legend trippers will find ways to continue to seek fear and thrill provoking experiences at alternate sites away from such restrictions.²²⁵

²²³ Examples of this include the Preston School of Industry in Ione, California, that promotes paranormal tours as part of its standard tour offerings to supplement income (<https://prestoncastle.org/tours>) and the Lizzie Borden Bed & Breakfast in Fall River, Massachusetts, that offers overnight stays, tours and even a museum, all directly tied to the Lizzie Borden legend (<https://lizzie-borden.com>).

²²⁴ Derek H. Alderman, "Writing on the Graceland Wall: On the Importance of Authorship in Pilgrimage Landscapes," in *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music*, ed. Thomas L. Bell and Ola Johansson (New York: Routledge, 2016), 53–65, <https://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook?sid=af234a7a-d06d-484d-a8e9-28b101583548%40sessionmgr4007&vid=0&format=EB>.

²²⁵ See: Ellis, "Death by Folklore"; Ellis, "Legend-Trips and Satanism."

The Poe gravesite is an example of how legend tripping can be leveraged as a positive experience and used as the focal point of events and tours. As discussed, the Poe Toaster phenomenon falls on the end of the legend tripping spectrum that deals with few appreciable negative impacts, but fairly robust local interest and interaction. Stewards at the Westminster Cemetery, the location of Poe's gravesite, took control of the narrative and, leveraging existing resources in terms of location and prominence of story, established supervised events that allowed the audience to expand by making the event more accessible. Though clearly this approach will not be viable or effective for all legend trip destinations, the arrangement and management of the Poe Toaster events could potentially serve to initiate conversations at other historic places with a similar combination of resources and impact frequency.

Along these lines, another approach that may be successful for the right historic property, and the right site stewards is to incorporate elements of ghost or paranormal tourism. Ghost tour offerings are expanding worldwide, allowing tour operators to cater to, and profit from, tourists' interests and motivations.²²⁶ While certainly more of a niche market, with the right set of conditions, historic places could feature activities and offerings beyond incidental displays or occasional events, making the potential for uncanny and supernatural experiences a promoted and routine site offering.²²⁷ One potential benefit of this approach is that site personnel would frequently be on-site for

²²⁶ Genoveva Dancausa, Ricardo D. Hernández, and Leonor M. Pérez, "Motivations and Constraints for the Ghost Tourism: A Case Study in Spain," *Leisure Sciences*, August 8, 2020, 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2020.1805655>.

²²⁷ On ghost and paranormal tourism, see: Dancausa, Hernández, and Pérez; Julian Holloway, "Legend-Tripping in Spooky Spaces: Ghost Tourism and Infrastructures of Enchantment," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28, no. 4 (August 1, 2010): 618–37, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d9909>; James Houran et al., "Paranormal Tourism: Market Study of a Novel and Interactive Approach to Space Activation and Monetization," *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (August 1, 2020): 287–311, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965520909094>; Diane E. Goldstein, Sylvia Ann Grider, and Jeanie Banks Thomas, "The Commodification of Belief," in *Haunting Experiences*, Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore (University Press of Colorado, 2007), 171–205, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt4cgmqg.11>.

these nighttime adventures, possibly offering additional discouragement or redirection unauthorized visitors. Site stewards designing such tours may also consider engaging members of the legend tripping community in an advisory capacity to provide insight into the ostensive actions and anticipated outcomes.

Not all sites will support the commercialization approach, physically or philosophically, but it may be an option in certain circumstances and is worth the consideration of site stewards, especially if doing so may generate needed funds for maintenance and upkeep of the site. Although implementing approaches that acknowledge and promote legends and related claims of supernatural experiences might increase legend trips to the site (and consequently the associated impacts), implementing an authorized approach to the legends and legend tripping can effectively normalize the behaviors and make them less of an unconventional experience.

A Promising Partnership

The study of folk narratives and folkways has always necessarily been focused on people, the eponymous “folk.” The practice of historic preservation, which has traditionally, though not exclusively, centered on grand buildings and structures, has in recent years shifted to a similar focus on people, recognizing vernacular architecture, cultural landscapes, traditional main streets, the importance of smart growth and other programs created for the people who value those sites.²²⁸ Thus aligned in their focus on people, the two disciplines can work together in ways that benefit both.

²²⁸ National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Preservation for People*.

The fundamental link between folk narratives and historic places in legend tripping adds to the opportunities for productive collaboration between historic preservation practitioners and folklorists. Existing studies of legend tripping have focused on the stories – the legends, and the people – the legend trippers. With the further connection of physical place to the stories and people, as presented in this treatise, a new element has entered the conversation and is ripe for further examination.

In the case of legend tripping specifically, Ellis claims that folklorists “can not limit their scope to verbal art alone, but must acknowledge that the tradition includes serious threats in real life.”²²⁹ In this quote, Ellis is referencing the serious threats in terms of personal and community safety, however I assert his comment could be extrapolated to include serious threats to historic places in real life. Preservation of historic places targeted by legend trippers is important beyond the site’s role as the location where legend trippers engage in tests of reality and rebellion against adult rules, and beyond the narrative folklore context, too. Historic places targeted by legend trippers are material artefacts of the folk and cultures who built them and created the narratives that keep them alive. They are the physical link binding people with story. Once those disappear, the link is broken.

Reframing the conversation

I encourage folklorists and preservation practitioners to find ways to partner and collaborate, where possible, to study specifically how the legend tripping impacts and is impacted by the landscape. In her study of legend tripping at Hatch’s Camp, Lisa Gabbert acknowledges that “...the role of landscape or places in legend formation remains somewhat underexamined by legend scholars,

²²⁹ Ellis, “Death by Folklore,” 219.

perhaps because in folklore studies legends are generally considered either as a species of narrative and/or a postulate of belief, neither of which are necessarily associated with physical realms.”²³⁰

Gabbert and Paul Jordan-Smith grant that the study of place, including creation of sense of place, is catching up with folklore in that it is no longer considered a thing existing on its own, but rather a process.²³¹ In legend tripping the “process” or performance of folklore acts in a way to impact physical place by initiating action upon it. In other words, folklore doesn’t just tell about material culture, but has the potential to physically impact it as well.

Folklorists, history buffs and more preservation-minded legend trippers who wish to engage in the conversation incorporating physical place with legend could work with preservationists and reach out local active or potential legend tripping sites to identify other stories that may be associated with the site. Folklorists can contribute to this more comprehensive study of legend tripping by helping to fully document specific legend trip performances and the different associated performance variants. This, along with documentation of the actual impacts to historic places from legend tripping will create a robust official historic narrative of a historic place. Both folklorists and historic preservationists can engage in efforts to support, maintain and advocate for historic places impacted by legend tripping.

Recommendations for future study

For this study, I employed a Critical Topic Approach as the research methodology, which involves exploring a set of critical questions through a defined set of illuminators or examples. As

²³⁰ Gabbert, “Legend Quests and the Curious Case of St. Ann’s Retreat,” 112.

²³¹ Gabbert and Jordan-Smith, “Introduction,” 220.

such, this study discusses the relationship between legend tripping and historic places primarily by examining a limited set of examples in detail. Future research in this area should expand the number of historic legend tripping places studied, as well as employ different methodological approaches to contribute to a more robust collection of data. While this study was limited in its scope, the recommendations below will build on the information herein and create a rich field of study into the impacts of legend tripping on historic places.

There is a large body of research into legend tripping in the context of adolescent and young adult psychological development and the legends themselves, which is growing to include a closer look at the performance and ritual elements. As Elizabeth Bird notes, “Earlier scholarship on legend concentrated primarily on text, the stories themselves. More recently, an extensive and growing body of literature has been examining the legend in context, including the dynamics of performance.”²³² I propose that the next phase should include examination of the locations of the legends and impacts of legend performance on those locations. These examinations should employ a holistic approach that include identification of other historic sites that are legend trip destinations, comprehensive analysis of the traditional legend trip elements, in addition to evaluation of resulting impacts to the site and how such impacts are addressed, if at all. Ideally, such review would include interviews with legend trippers touching on, among other things, their thoughts about how their actions impact legend trip sites.

Further studies of place as it relates to legend tripping would enable a broader understanding of the practice and its impact on historic places. Deeper consideration of the social value placed on historic places by legend trippers, additional study of temporary or episodic place attachment, and

²³² Bird, “Playing with Fear.” 114.

how that evolves over time could all contribute to deeper understanding of legend tripping. Similarly, further study on place attachment as a driver to physically interact with a place that a person wouldn't otherwise encounter might shed more light on that aspect of legend tripping. This area of study should also include identification of other legend tripping destinations that may qualify for designation as TCPs.

Despite the undeniable role of physical places in legend tripping activities, study of legend tripping remains the domain of folklorists, ethnographers and anthropologists, with little contribution from the preservation community. An examination of a wider range of existing legend tripping literature with an eye to specific impacts including inventories of impacts identified by site stewards at locations that experience legend tripping could provide a more qualitative understanding of the problem. Quantitative analysis of the degree to which sites experience a reduction in legend tripping impacts following implementation of specific mitigation strategies is required in order to continually evaluate which approaches are most successful.

Finally, in 2018, Dylan Thuras, co-founder of Atlas Obscura, a multi-media conglomerate that uses story to connect people with places, food, culture and other experiences, gave a presentation titled "Storytelling as Preservation: The Role of Media in Saving Roadside Architecture," at a National Center for Preservation Technology and Training conference.²³³ He was asked whether Atlas Obscura had conducted any research into the impact that publicizing of a site by inclusion in the Atlas Obscura collection has on the sites. Thuras acknowledged that was an area where they didn't have much more than anecdotal evidence and agreed that someone should look into that aspect or

²³³ The Atlas Obscura collective includes a podcast, website, books, tours and classes.

expand on work that has been done on such a topic.²³⁴ I agree that studies should be conducted to attempt to quantify the impacts, whether perceived as positive or negative, on sites whose stories, including legends, are brought to the attention of larger audiences via on-line platforms and other digital media.

Conclusion

Legends associated with specific historic locations coupled with the potential for uncanny or supernatural experiences spur legend trips, which can result in serious consequences to the physical location. Most historic places address legend tripping impacts in their own way, with varying degrees of success. A site steward's awareness when impacts to a site are something other than "routine" vandalism, and recognition and understanding of the specific motivator – the legend - may provide an opportunity to consider a broader range of approaches that can potentially be employed in an effort to address or contain the impacts.

Many variables contribute to determining the best mitigation strategies for legend trip targets. Deterrent based approaches, such as fences, lights, and security cameras, may be effective in preventing legend tripper access to the historic place, but these have associated and potentially significant costs. In fact, bypassing these measures may even be viewed by legend trippers as part of the challenge to be overcome rather than a deterrent to their behavior. It is clear that no single approach will work in all cases. However, savvy site stewards will know how to recognize when their site is experiencing impacts from legend tripping, and will work with available resources, including

²³⁴ Dylan Thuras, "Storytelling as Preservation: The Role of Media in Saving Roadside Architecture." (National Center for Preservation Technology and Training Symposium, Tulsa, OK, April 10, 2018), <https://www.ncptt.nps.gov/blog/storytelling-as-preservation-the-role-of-media-in-saving-roadside-architecture-2/>.

preservation practitioners and folklorists to identify and implement appropriate solutions to the impacts of legend tripping that will not, in themselves, cause their own harm.

The methods and means used to address legend tripping impacts can have repercussions beyond that specific intent. Site stewards should always remain mindful of the wider implications of their actions and do their best to balance the preservation of the site with the interests of the community and others connected with the property. A simple request to be respectful and follow the rules may be effective, but often greater nuance is required (see fig. 22). Analyzing and addressing impacts to legend trip destinations is best accomplished through collaboration between site stewards, preservationists and folklorists, and to examine these spaces through a different lens. And though often the impacts of legend trips are in the form of damaging physical effects on the structures of the site, viewing the phenomenon of legend tripping as a sum of its component parts could aid in the creation of approaches that have more positive outcomes.



Figure 22. Detail of the sign placed at Divine's grave asking fans to consider their impact of their visit on families of those whose loved ones are buried in the surrounding graves, and offering a reminder about the illegality of some actions. [Amy Weber; October 28, 2021]

APPENDIX

ILLUMINATOR CASE STUDIES

Case studies for each of the historic places used to illuminate the key aspects of this study are presented below. The studies contain information I collected and analyzed for each site, including a description of the location, property type, ownership structure, and historic designation status. I also provide a brief physical description of each site, as well as an overview of each site's history, associated legends, and legend tripping activities. I present this information here in the appendix in order to provide the full account of each site not included elsewhere in this thesis treatise.

Hatch's Camp Logan Canyon, Utah

Location

Hatch's Camp, also known as St. Ann[e]'s Retreat, the Nunnery, Forest Hill, and Pine Glenn Cove, is located in Cache National Forest in Cache County, Utah. It is situated in the north eastern portion of the state, approximately sixteen miles south of the Idaho border and approximately seventy miles north of Salt Lake City. The property sits south off of Canyon Road (Highway 89) along the Logan River in Logan Canyon, approximately eight miles east of the city of Logan. (Fig. 23)

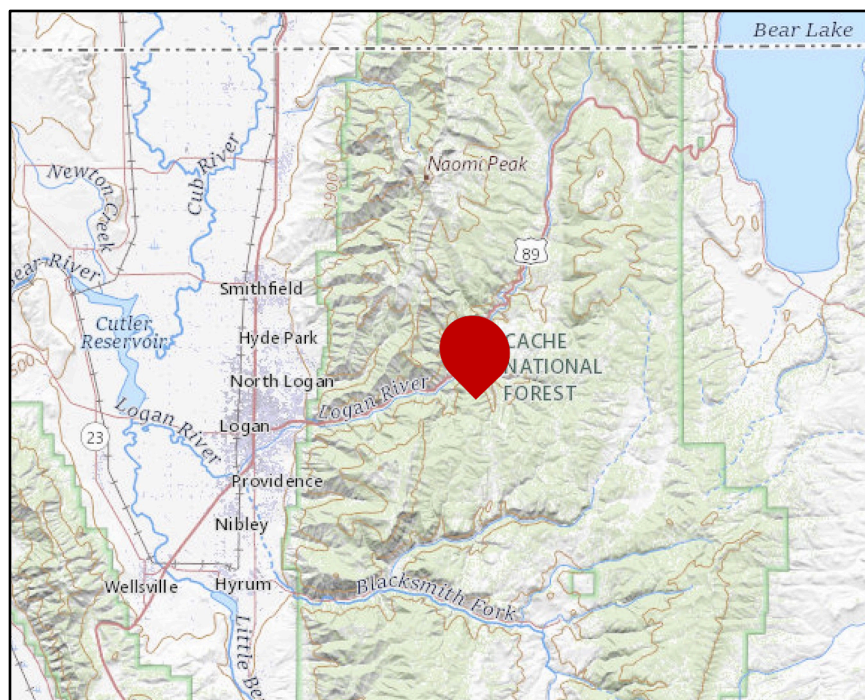


Figure 23. Location of Hatch's Camp in Cache National Forest, Utah. [U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic map²³⁵]

Property Type

Hatch's Camp is a currently unoccupied 2.85 acre multi-structure summer home and recreational complex in the Forest Hills Summer Home tract.

Ownership Structure

The land is owned by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), however the improvements are owned by individuals or entities.²³⁶ Owners of improvements on property owned by the USFS must obtain

²³⁵ USGS Topographic Map, Mount Elmer Quadrangle, Utah – Cache County, 7.5-minute series, 2020, UTM Reference: 12T 446227 4624742 (41.77582° N / -111.64992° W).

²³⁶ “Improvements” refers to the buildings and structures constructed on the land that are considered separate from the land itself. I was ultimately unable to make contact with David Richards, the current owner of the improvements to Hatch's Camp. As of this writing, the property is currently for sale and listed on local Utah real estate websites.

a Special Use Permit to “occupy, use or build on Forest Service land for personal or business purposes, whether the duration is temporary or long term.”²³⁷ According to Rachelle Handley in the Archeology & Historic Preservation department of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the USFS attaches “terms and conditions on the use of the land” and generally only permit uses with some “greater public benefit.”²³⁸ Handley also confirmed that the USFS is “responsible for ensuring compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act” and that work done at the site must be planned in collaboration with the Utah State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and meet the Secretary of the Interior’s (SOI) Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.²³⁹

Designation

Hatch’s Camp was added to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) on December 27, 2006. The camp is eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under Criterion A as a “property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” and Criterion C as a property that “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.”²⁴⁰ Utah does not have an active state level list of historic properties separate from the NTHP, though there are several certified local governments (CLG).²⁴¹ CLGs are “municipalities that have demonstrated through a certification process a commitment to local preservation” and requires establishment of a historic preservation commission and establishment of a system to inventory historic resources, among other requirements.²⁴² As Hatch’s Camp is located in Cache National Forest, it does not fall under the jurisdiction of any of the CLGs.

Site Description

I was not able to visit this site in person given time and distance constraints, however I assembled the following description from information available on-line, in the Hatch’s Camp NRHP Registration Form and on-line satellite imagery. The site is accessible from Highway 89 via a small vehicular bridge over the Logan River, which runs along the south side of the highway in this area.

²³⁷ “Special-Use Permit Application.”

²³⁸ Handley. The USDA oversees the USFS.

²³⁹ Handley.

²⁴⁰ U.S. National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15*, 2.

²⁴¹ Roger Roper, interview by author, March 25, 2022.

²⁴² “Certified Local Government Program - Historic Preservation Fund (U.S. National Park Service),” accessed April 29, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/certified-local-government-program.htm>.

The property contains twenty-one structures, of which seventeen are contributing historic resources.²⁴³ Figure 24 below shows the arrangement of the buildings and structures as of the 2006 NRHP designation. The structures are built into a landscape that includes steep slopes and vegetation.²⁴⁴

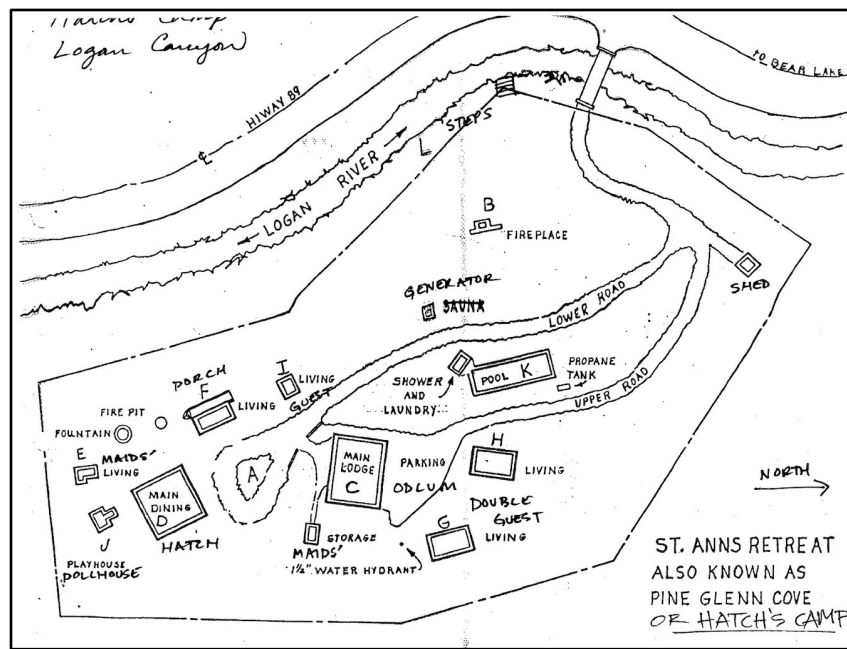


Figure 24. Map of Hatch's Camp included in the 2006 NRHP nomination form. ["Hatch's Camp," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, July 20, 2006]

The upper and lower roads of the property connect to various buildings and structures including two main houses (one for the Hatch family and one for the Odium family). There are also several small cabins, a play house, sheds, stone fireplaces, and stone steps and walls. Plywood currently covers the windows and doors on most of the buildings. According to Handley, "the current

²⁴³ Broschinsky.

²⁴⁴ Dale N. Bosworth, "Letter from Forest Supervisor Dale Bosworth to District Ranger, Logan Re: St. Ann's Retreat, Roman Catholic Bishop of Salt Lake City," August 23, 1989.

owners have attempted to board up most of the buildings to prevent entry on a regular basis.”²⁴⁵ Razor-wire topped fencing, damaged in some places, lines some or all of the perimeter of the site, and vehicle gates cross the bridge.²⁴⁶

History

The site consists of two camps originally owned by the wealthy Hatch and Odlum families, who were related by marriage and who received the first Special Use Permits from the USFS for the property. The first building was a cabin built by the Hatch family between 1915 and 1918.²⁴⁷ Most of the other structures were constructed between 1915 and 1935 with styles “ranging from the bungalow and Arts & Crafts influenced cabin built by the Hatch family, to the National Park Rustic stone and wood buildings constructed by the Hatches and Odlums around 1929-1930.”²⁴⁸

In the 1950s, the Hatch and Odlum families donated their lease from the USFS and the improvements on the land to the Roman Catholic Diocese who renamed the camp “St. Ann’s Retreat.”²⁴⁹ The diocese used the camp as a retreat for the Sisters of the Holy Cross and later as a recreational youth camp. The diocese ceased use of the site late 1980s at least in part due to a “high rate of trespassing and vandalism.”²⁵⁰ A 1989 letter from then Forest Supervisor Dale Bosworth to the District Ranger in Logan described his decision to revert the site to a residential recreation site, claiming the property is not suitable for organizational use. He went on to list several conditions applicable to issuance of a Recreation Residence Permit for the site, including that USFS personnel meet with applicants at the site and agree in writing to an operation and maintenance plan.²⁵¹

Legends

The legends about Hatch’s Camp surfaced after the site was donated to the Catholic Church. Many of the legends inaccurately classify the location as a nunnery and refer to pregnant nuns who

²⁴⁵ Handley.

²⁴⁶ Broschinsky.

²⁴⁷ Broschinsky.

²⁴⁸ Broschinsky, 11.

²⁴⁹ Broschinsky, 15.

²⁵⁰ Broschinsky, 15.

²⁵¹ Bosworth. This letter predates the 2006 listing in the NRHP and does not address preservation of historic elements or materials.

hid away at the site before giving birth and drowning the newborns in the pool.²⁵² They describe “hell hounds” kept by the nuns to release on unwanted visitors. There are also stories that the site is haunted by murdered nuns found floating in pool and nuns who froze to death.²⁵³ A local Hecate legend is also attached to the site with versions that involve an old woman or witch who, in some versions, is associated with Dobermans or wolves.²⁵⁴

Legends referring to “red-eyed Dobermans, the haunting sound of murdered babies crying out, Witch Hecate in the shape of a cloud moving down the mountain, the car not starting, boulders falling down the mountain upon curious visitors, blood in the swimming pool, (representing the death that the pool is so much associated with)” offer ample enticement to local teens and young adults seeking to test reality or prove their bravery.²⁵⁵ Utah State University maintains a curated a digital exhibit about Hatch’s Camp (under the “St. Anne’s Retreat” name) on their website.²⁵⁶ The exhibit explores the history of the site, associated legends and legend tripping. The exhibit includes an interesting student collection of legends and legend variants associated with the Hatch’s Camp as well, in addition to a collection of news articles describing a 1997 incident at the site (described below). The collection also delves lightly into some of the social and cultural tensions in the community that are reflected in the legends and legend tripping associated with Hatch’s Camp.²⁵⁷

Legend Tripping

Legend tripping to Hatch’s Camp appears to have started in the 1950s, in response to legends of pregnant nuns, drowned babies and hell hounds. It seems as though the performance in most cases may be displaying the bravery of accessing the site at night. In the case of the Hecate legends, which is attached to the larger canyon, the performance sometimes involves calling her name a certain number of times.²⁵⁸

²⁵² Carrie Moore, “Legends Surround St. Ann’s Retreat,” *Deseret News*, July 22, 2006, <https://www.deseret.com/2006/7/22/19964899/legends-surround-st-ann-s-retreat>.

²⁵³ Anna-Maria Snæbjörnsdóttir Arnljóts, “Legend Tripping at St. Anne’s Retreat and Hecate in Logan Canyon: Origin, Belief and Contemporary Oral Tradition” (Logan, Utah, Utah State University, 2000), <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports/132>.

²⁵⁴ Arnljóts.

²⁵⁵ Arnljóts, 4.

²⁵⁶ See: Utah State University St. Anne’s Retreat digital exhibit: <http://exhibits.lib.usu.edu/exhibits/show/stannesretreat>.

²⁵⁷ “St. Anne’s Retreat · USU Digital Exhibits,” accessed April 29, 2022, <http://exhibits.lib.usu.edu/exhibits/show/stannesretreat>.

²⁵⁸ Arnljóts.

Handley admitted that there has been “extensive damage” to the site, with many structures considered “almost beyond repair.”²⁵⁹ Impacts at the site include “broken windows, breaching barriers, broken doors, fires, trash, human feces, theft of materials, vandalism, graffiti, and structural damage.”²⁶⁰ Over the years, several approaches have been implemented to curb legend trip activity at the site. One of these approaches ended in disaster in the late 1990s. On October 10, 1997, two groups of legend trippers, totaling nearly forty teenagers and young adults, descended on Hatch’s Camp. Armed caretakers at the site rounded up members of both groups and forced them into the empty swimming pool. The legend trippers were bound together with rope around their necks and tormented by the caretakers until the police arrived.²⁶¹ Initially, police arrested the trespassers. However, after it came to light that some of the teens were “allegedly verbally threatened, physically abused, and sexually assaulted while awaiting the arrival of the local police,” the trespassing charges were dropped against the legend trippers and the caretakers were charged with six counts of felony counts of aggravated assault.²⁶²

The USFS has informed the current owner that neither they nor any prospective buyer will be granted a Special Use Permit allowing promotion of the site for “inappropriate uses,” including “promoting some of the myths/legends/‘haunted’ type activities, essentially anything that isn’t consistent with the status of this site as a National Historic Register site and the accurate history associated” with it.²⁶³ The USFS believes that the “true history” of the site should be promoted through public education in an effort to debunk the legends surrounding the camp.²⁶⁴ When asked whether there are any circumstances under which tripper activity can be seen as positive or employed in a way that benefits the site, the USFS responded:

In this case the answer is unequivocally no. The Legend Tripping causes severe damage to the site to the point of which a Historic Property listed on the National Register of Historic Places may be irretrievably damaged to the point to where the site may ultimately be demolished. Additionally, the mythology and Legend Tripping associated with the site has served to disparage a religious minority in the state of Utah,

²⁵⁹ Handley.

²⁶⁰ Handley.

²⁶¹ Amy Macavinta, “St. Anne’s Retreat Trespassing Persists.”

²⁶² “3 Canyon Guards Each Face 6 Charges over Retreat Terror.”

²⁶³ Handley.

²⁶⁴ Handley.

which is predominately LDS. In addition to physical damage, there is also a strong thread of religious discrimination associated with the legends surrounding the site.²⁶⁵

Interestingly, because Hatch's Camp is a historic property owned by a U.S. government agency, any projects they license or approve related to the place initiates Section 106 review, which requires consultation with other relevant agencies, as well as interested parties (such as federally recognized Native American tribes and preservation advocacy organizations) and the public.²⁶⁶ Designation of Hatch's Camp as a Traditional Cultural Property as suggested in Chapter V would require that the legend tripping community be included in consultations about the impacts of any federally funded, licensed or approved projects impacting the property. That is to say that the traditional beliefs and uses of the property by legend trippers would have to be considered in future plans for the site.

Jericho Covered Bridge Kingsville, Maryland

Location

The Jericho Covered Bridge is located in Gunpowder Falls State Park in central Maryland. The park covers 18,000 acres in Baltimore and Harford counties.²⁶⁷ The bridge spans the Little Gunpowder Falls that divides eastern Baltimore County and western Harford County. It is on Jericho Road, approximately 0.25 mile south of Jerusalem Road in Harford County and 0.18 mile north of the intersection of Jericho Road with Greenhouse Lane (see fig. 25). The area can be called "suburban rural" – located outside of more populous towns but in an area with scattered housing developments and small acreage farms.

²⁶⁵ Handley. "LDS" refers to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Hatch's Camp is located in an area where a high percentage of the population belongs to the LDS church and the disparaging legends of promiscuous Catholic nuns is seen by some as a form of discrimination. See: <http://exhibits.lib.usu.edu/exhibits/show/stannesretreat/projectiveinversion>

²⁶⁶ "An Introduction to Section 106 | Advisory Council on Historic Preservation," accessed April 30, 2022, <https://www.achp.gov/protecting-historic-properties/section-106-process/introduction-section-106>.

²⁶⁷ "Gunpowder Falls," Maryland Department of Natural Resources, accessed May 1, 2022, <https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/default.aspx>.

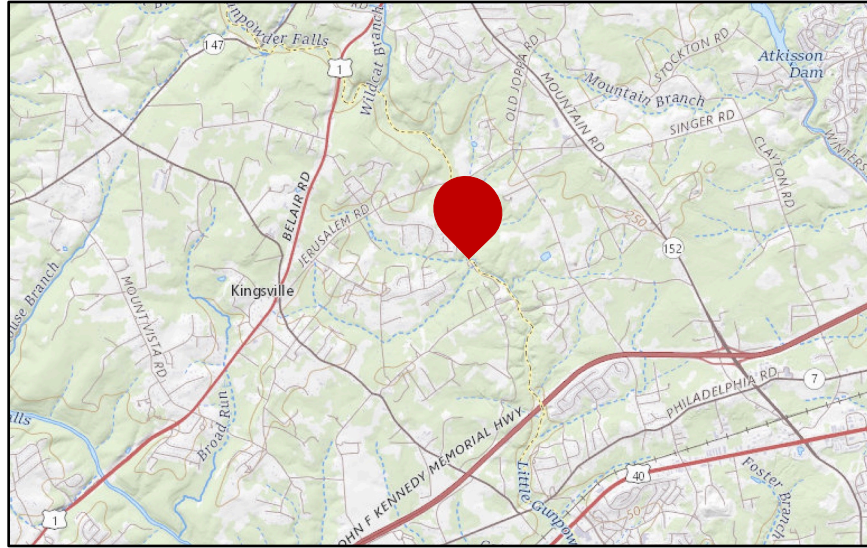


Figure 25. Location of Jericho Covered Bridge in northeast Baltimore County, Maryland. [USGS topographic map²⁶⁸]

Property Type

The structure is a covered wood bridge in active transportation use.

Ownership Structure

Jericho Covered Bridge is owned by the Baltimore County and Harford County Highway Departments. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is responsible for the overall management of the park in which the bridge is located. The DNR headquarters for Gunpowder State Park is located in the historic grist mill in nearby Jerusalem Mill Village.

The Friends of Jerusalem Mills (FOJM), a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization has leased the historic mill village, including Jericho Covered Bridge, from state of Maryland for the last thirty-six years. FOJM is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to “preserve, protect, and restore” the village buildings and grounds.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ USGS Topographic Map, White Marsh Quadrangle, Maryland, 7.5-minute series, 2019, UTM Reference: 18S 380891 4367329 (39.44405° N / -76.387704° W).

²⁶⁹ Decker.

Designation

Jericho Covered Bridge was added to the NRHP on September 13, 1978, with Areas of Significance identified as engineering and transportation. The bridge was also added to the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties in 1978. It was designated as a Baltimore County Landmark by the Maryland State Historic Preservation Office on March 16, 1978. The bridge was added to the Maryland State Highway Administration's Historic Bridge Inventory in 2001.

Site Description

Jericho Covered Bridge, one of only three covered bridges still in service in Maryland, sits on a narrow county two lane road (though only one car can cross at a time). Both the north and south bound roadway leading to, over, and away from the bridge are heavily wooded on each side with no sidewalk or road shoulder. Thick wood guard rails hug the road for several yards on both the north and south ends of the bridge (see fig. 26). As a public roadway, there are no barriers to access, though as a covered bridge there is a strict height limitation on vehicles using the bridge. Cars parking near the bridge will block a portion the roadway. Authorized parking is about a quarter of a mile away in the visitor parking lot.



Figure 26. View of the south entrance of the Jericho Covered Bridge showing wood guard rails and heavily wooded setting. [Amy Weber; January 23, 2022]

The bridge is 87' 10" long with a cedar shingle roof, and vertical board cladding (see fig. 27). Architecturally, the bridge is a Burr-arch truss with slanting portals. The abutments on both shores

are comprised of stone block, reinforced with concrete where the truss timbers connect. The bridge is currently painted red, inside and out, with flame retardant, graffiti resistant paint.²⁷⁰



Figure 27. Jericho Covered Bridge after 2016 restoration. [Photograph courtesy of mdcoveredbridges.com]

I visited Jerusalem Mill Village and the Jericho Covered Bridge initially in January of 2022. After meeting with Rick Decker, president of the Friends of Jerusalem Mill, in the old grist mill, I followed the park trail past the dairy barn ruins, along the jousting lists to the bridge. I observed the over-height protection measures (known affectionally as “head knockers”) installed to prevent vehicles that are taller than the bridge entry from attempting to access the bridge. I observed several security cameras inside and outside of the bridge structure. The FOJM keep the bridge in excellent condition, immediately removing any graffiti, litter and other damage. Close inspection did reveal old carvings on some timbers, which have been painted over.

²⁷⁰ Jim Smedley, “Jericho Covered Bridge,” Maryland Covered Bridges, accessed February 5, 2022, <http://www.mdcoveredbridges.com/jericho.html>.

History

Jericho Covered Bridge was built at the request of citizens in Baltimore and Harford counties to connect mills on opposite sides of the river.²⁷¹ As noted in the NRHP Nomination Form, the bridge is not an “engineering marvel of its class,” but it is the last remaining of a once prolific population of covered bridges in Baltimore and Harford counties.²⁷² It is not associated with any people or events important in Maryland’s history.²⁷³

Jericho Covered Bridge has undergone repairs and restoration on several occasions to maintain and strengthen the structure. Most recently, the bridge was the subject of an extensive restoration project in 2016. During this restoration, all of the exterior cladding was removed and the bridge truss frame was rolled off the river to allow for replacement of about 25% of the heavy timbers and the installation of new steel support beams.²⁷⁴

Legends

Several legends are associated with the Jericho Covered Bridge. I did not locate much in the way of detailed legends, only generalized references to legend subjects. These include legends related to hangings, either of runaway enslaved people or teenagers who entered into a suicide pact.²⁷⁵ These legends often claim that the dangling legs of these unfortunate souls can be seen in the rearview mirror of cars crossing the bridge. There are also claims of sightings of ghostly Civil War soldiers on the bridge, despite the fact that the bridge wasn’t built until later in the year the war ended (which also makes the lynching of runaway enslaved people unlikely here).²⁷⁶

One legend involves a woman who threw her baby off the bridge then hanged herself in the rafters. According to that legend, one can hear the woman singing a lullaby to her baby.²⁷⁷ Another legend relates to a wagon fire that was alleged to have occurred on the bridge in which a young girl was burned, resulting her apparitions appearing on the bridge. Some also claim to see the ghostly figure of a woman carrying a basket of flowers. In other versions, it is the woman who is burned and a young girl who carries the basket of flowers. There are also tales of strange creatures associated with

²⁷¹ Smedley.

²⁷² McGrain.

²⁷³ McGrain.

²⁷⁴ Smedley.

²⁷⁵ Outta the Way.

²⁷⁶ Lauren Impallaria, “Is the Jericho Bridge Really Haunted?,” *The Bellarion* (blog), accessed May 1, 2022, <https://thebellarion.com/student-life/2014/09/11/is-the-jericho-bridge-really-haunted/>.

²⁷⁷ Impallaria.

the bridge, including a monkey-like being with a long tail and a red-eyed demon.²⁷⁸ In addition to sightings of various apparitions and fantastic creatures, legends tell of cars that stall for no reason on the bridge that cannot be restarted for several minutes.

The FOJM maintain that there is no evidence supporting a factual basis for any of these legends. Decker blame the continued spread of these “false” legends on the Internet.²⁷⁹ He endeavors to let legend trippers know that the legends are unfounded when he approaches them at the site.

Regardless, the legends tied to Jericho Covered Bridge continue to circulate and legend trippers continue to visit the site. On Halloween night in 2021, two separate groups, including some with out-of-state license plates, were found at the bridge. Decker approached both groups and explained that they are unlikely to be rewarded with any paranormal sightings because there is no truth to the legends. And as recently as April 28, 2022 – as I was finalizing this case study – the website Tripping on Legends reposted a story from 2021 wherein an outfit called “3Notch Paranormal Investigations” conducted a daylight “investigation” of the site during which they claim to have captured evidence that the bridge is haunted using a “SLS camera” and other gadgets employed by ghost hunters.²⁸⁰

Legend Tripping

Legend trips to Jericho covered bridge typically involve people driving over the bridge at night or approaching the bridge on foot. One variant of the legends, which involves seeing the ghostly forms of hanged people on the bridge, requires the driver to accelerate quickly (“burn out”) on the entrance of the bridge, which results in marring of the bridge decking with rubber tire residue.²⁸¹ Other legend trippers have “tagged” or applied graffiti to the structure, including names, expletives, and pentagrams and other symbols. One group of legend trippers even attempted to start a small fire on the wooden deck of the bridge.²⁸²

The FOJM view legend tripping as a significant problem. Again, Decker views the Internet as the biggest culprit in such wide dissemination of the legends. His preference would be to debunk the legends on the basis that if potential legend trippers understood that the supposed historic

²⁷⁸ Outta the Way.

²⁷⁹ Decker.

²⁸⁰ 3notchparanormalinvestigations, “Jericho Covered Bridge: Our Exciting Investigation of A Haunted Site in Maryland,” *3 Notch Paranormal Investigations* (blog), May 11, 2021, <https://3notchparanormalinvestigations.com/2021/05/11/jericho-covered-bridge-our-exciting-investigation-of-a-haunted-site-in-maryland/>.

²⁸¹ Decker.

²⁸² Decker.

events that are alleged to give rise to the supernatural experiences never occurred, they'll understand that they are unlikely to have any experiences at the bridge.²⁸³

Decker confirmed that the FOJM have considered conducting events at the site geared toward the legends and offering related activities to the public. However, they ultimately determined that they were not willing to risk the potential for increased legend tripping impacts that could result from promoting the legends.

“Black Aggie”
Druid Ridge Cemetery
Pikesville, Maryland

Location

Druid Ridge Cemetery is located at 7900 Park Heights Avenue in Baltimore County, Maryland. It is situated in the north east corner inside the Baltimore Beltway (I-695) and less than one mile northwest of the Baltimore City boundary. It is bounded to the north by the Baltimore Beltway, to the east by Park Heights Avenue, to the south by E. Sudbrook Lane and Old Court Road and to the west by Reisterstown Road (see fig. 28). Druid Ridge is surrounded by residences to the east and a mix of commercial and residential buildings to the south and west. The Suburban Club golf course is located just off the southeast corner of the cemetery, along E. Sudbrook Lane.

²⁸³ Decker.

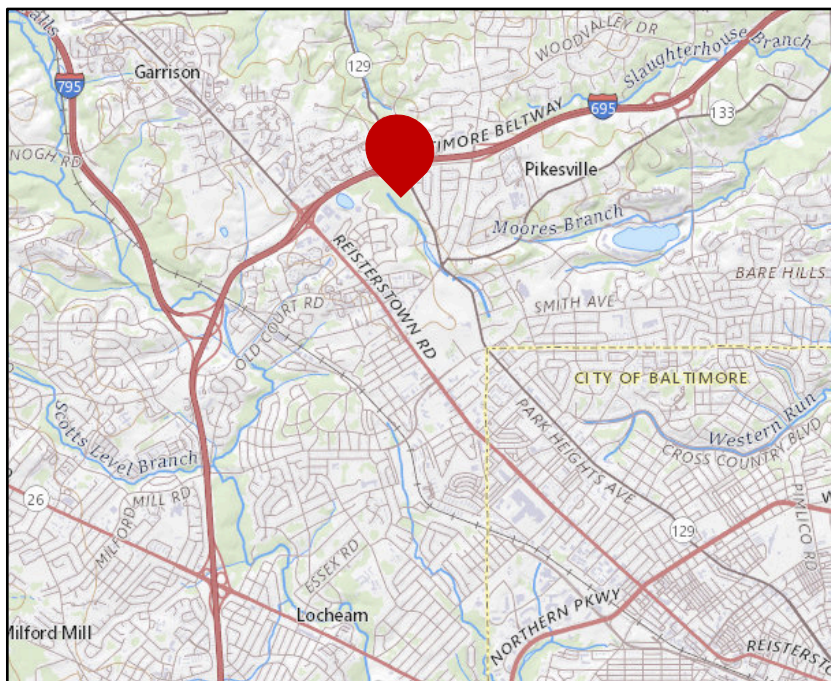


Figure 28. Location of Druid Ridge Cemetery, just northwest of the Baltimore City boundary. [USGS topographic map²⁸⁴]

Property Type

Druid Ridge is a two hundred and twenty acre private garden cemetery.

Ownership Structure

Druid Ridge is privately owned. It is a Dignity Memorial provider, which means it is part of a family of cemeteries, funeral homes and cremation services providers. Dignity Memorial is one of several brands providing similar services under Service Corporation International, a publicly traded company.

Designation

Druid Ridge Cemetery is not in the NRHP, the Maryland Inventory of Historic Places, nor is it a designated Baltimore County Landmark. Provided that a case can be made that Druid Ridge

²⁸⁴ USGS Topographic Map, Cockeysville Quadrangle, Maryland, 7.5-minute series, 2019, UTM Reference: 18S 353308 4359535 (39.384032° N / -76.724387° W).

meets the requirements under Criteria Consideration D applicable to designation of cemeteries in the NRHP, it could be added in the future.²⁸⁵

Site Description

Druid Ridge Cemetery is a park-like setting with a gently rolling landscape. It is not fully fenced or gated at night. It has a 3 acre spring water lake that is home to a number of waterfowl. There is a large central mausoleum and smaller crypts and memorial statues interspersed among headstones of various sizes and shapes. Mature trees and shrubs are dot the landscape. The location is quiet and peaceful.

As the Black Aggie statue was removed from the cemetery in the 1960s, what remains is a large marble plinth with the name “AGNUS” inscribed at the bottom. The base has a six or seven foot marble vertical panel at the rear with decorative cornice at the top and bottom. There is an area of chipped concrete on the base resulting from removal of the statue. Three Agnus line the front of the plot, along the access road.

History

Druid Ridge Cemetery was established in 1898. A collection of New York and Baltimore business men acquired the land and implemented an organizing plan known as the “lawn system.”²⁸⁶ Felix Agnus, newspaper publisher and General in the Civil War, secured the bronze statue to adorn his family’s plot in Druid Ridge. While he thought he obtained an authorized replica of the original Saint-Gaudens statue at the burial site of Clover Adams in Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, D.C., he actually obtained an unauthorized copy.²⁸⁷ Although the Adams family requested that Agnus remove his version of the statue, he refused and was buried there in 1925.

Legends

As was the case with the Jericho Covered Bridge, I did not encounter a great deal of alleged back story related to the Black Aggie legends. One tale explains that the statue was dedicated to a

²⁸⁵ U.S. National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15*, 34. Under the National Register process, a cemetery is not typically eligible for listing other than through evidence that it is significant because people of “transcendent importance” are buried there, association with significant events in history, age, or distinctive design. Criteria Considerations specify additional eligibility requirements applicable to property types not usually eligible for listing (such as religious properties, birthplaces, cemeteries, reconstructed properties, etc.). Criteria Consideration requirements apply in addition to eligibility requirements under Criteria A – C.

²⁸⁶ “Druid Ridge Cemetery: Pretty Burial Ground at Pikesville Dedicated with Elaborate Exercises,” *The Sun*, June 13, 1898, 7, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

²⁸⁷ Kelly, “Black Aggie.”

well-loved woman who haunts the site because of how disrespectfully her gravesite is treated.²⁸⁸ Another explained the statue was cursed because a “cruel husband buried his devilish wife there.”²⁸⁹ Still another legend claims the statue was to commemorate a black woman murdered by white men.²⁹⁰

The most often shared, and therefore most relevant parts of the legends, are the stories about the supernatural and uncanny incidents that are alleged to happen to those who visit Black Aggie. Legends claim that looking into her eyes will make you go blind, pregnant women who sit in her lap will miscarry, and unmarried single women would become pregnant.²⁹¹ The statue is also allegedly associated with several deaths.²⁹²

Legend Tripping

Nighttime visits to the Black Aggie statue began not long after its emplacement. Fraternities in particular found her a suitable location for initiation hazings and tests of bravery.²⁹³ Often the performance of these legends involved sitting in the statue’s lap but sometimes just being there and looking at her at midnight was enough to activate the legend. As in many other examples, impacts to the site included leaving of tokens and coins, litter and tagging (often on the back of the plinth that remains in the cemetery today). Numerous accounts describe how the statue was removed in 1967 because of the on-going effects of these legend trippers.²⁹⁴

Mike Bennett, General Manager of Druid Ridge Cemetery, confirmed that the statue was ultimately relocated to finally bring an end to the legend tripping and vandalism at the Black Aggie statue and surrounding areas of the cemetery. This relocation of a family’s grave marker is an example of an extreme, maybe the most extreme, approach to mitigating legend trip effects. A sense of place intentionally created by Agnus for his family has been forever dismantled because the cemetery and descendants found the impacts so difficult to manage.

The Agnus family plot remains a destination for a different sort of legend tripper. As mentioned, Felix Agnus was a general in the Civil War and as such, his grave is a destination for Civil

²⁸⁸ Lake.

²⁸⁹ Blank and Puglia, 45.

²⁹⁰ Lake.

²⁹¹ Lake; Okonowicz, *Haunted Maryland*; Blank and Puglia, *Maryland Legends*.

²⁹² E. A. Black, “The Legend of Black Aggie,” *Cemetery Travel: Your Take-along Guide to Graves & Graveyards Around the World* (blog), May 20, 2016, <https://cemeterytravel.com/2016/05/20/the-legend-of-black-aggie/>.

²⁹³ Lake, *Weird Maryland*; Okonowicz, *Haunted Maryland*; Blank and Puglia, *Maryland Legends*.

²⁹⁴ Lake, *Weird Maryland*; Kelly, “Black Aggie.”

War buffs and historians.²⁹⁵ It is unfortunate that they are greeted with an empty plinth behind Agnus' small marble headstone (see fig. 29). Bennet said that cemetery staff are currently putting together proposed history tours that will visit the final resting places of notable people buried there. When asked whether they would consider addressing the history of legend tripping and the Black Aggie statue, Bennett indicated that they would consider it, but would not do so without first consulting with Agnus family descendants.²⁹⁶



Figure 29. The headstone of Felix Agnus rests between those of his mother (left) and wife (right), in front of the empty plinth where Black Aggie once sat. [Amy Weber; May 5, 2022]

The Black Aggie statue currently graces the interior courtyard of the United States Courts of Federal Claims, in downtown Washington, D.C. (see fig. 30). She is not visible from the street, but is accessible on weekdays during business hours when the iron gates spanning the arches on the front of the courts building are open. She rests in an open area surrounded by lush green plants and is visible from some interior portions of the building.

²⁹⁵ Bennett.

²⁹⁶ Bennett.



Figure 30: The Black Aggie statue now rests in an interior courtyard of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims in Washington D.C. [Amy Weber; May 16, 2022]

Poe Toaster Westminster Cemetery Baltimore, Maryland

Location

Westminster Hall and Cemetery is located in the densely populated area in downtown Baltimore City, Maryland. Three blocks north and seven blocks west of the Inner Harbor, it is bounded by West Fayette Street to the north, North Paca Street to the east, West Baltimore Street to the south and North Greene Street to the west (see fig. 31). It is surrounded by buildings mostly housing government and university entities, including the Baltimore Veterans Administration Medical Center, the University of Maryland School of Law, Thurgood Marshall Law Library, the Maryland State Bar Association, and the Pro-Bono Resource Center.

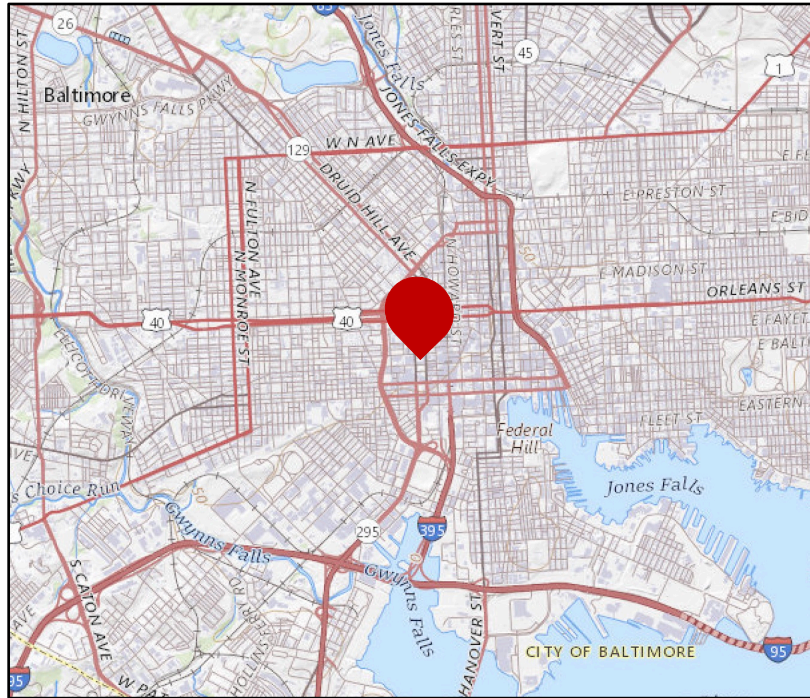


Figure 31. Location of Poe's gravesite in downtown Baltimore, Maryland. [USGS topographic map²⁹⁷]

Property Type

The Poe monument is situated in a historic cemetery located under and around a decommissioned historic Presbyterian church.

Ownership Structure

Both Westminster Hall and the surrounding cemetery containing the Poe monument are currently owned by the University of Maryland School of Law.

Designation

Westminster Hall was added to the NRHP on September 17, 1974 and to Baltimore City's Designated Landmark List on October 14, 1975. It is also included on the Maryland Inventory of

²⁹⁷ USGS Topographic Map, Baltimore East Quadrangle, Maryland, 7.5-minute series, 2019, UTM Reference: 18S 361725 4348692 (39.29037° N / -76.62360° W).

Historic Places. The Areas of Significance noted in the National Register of Historic Places Inventory nomination form are: architecture, art, landscape, literature, religion/philosophy, and sculpture.²⁹⁸

Site Description

The site is comprised of a decommissioned Presbyterian church, cemetery and catacombs. Located at the corner of West Fayette and North Greene Streets, the cemetery wraps on east side of church (which faces north) and around the back to the south. Narrow brick walkways wind between weathered tombstones, monuments and burial vaults. The terrain is somewhat uneven and large trees and shrubs pepper the cemetery. The site is surrounded by brick and cast iron fence, the gate of which is closed at sundown each evening.²⁹⁹ The site is bordered to the north and west by wide city streets with bright street lights during night time hours. Lights from surrounding buildings as well as area venues, including nearby Oriole Park at Camden Yards and M&T Bank stadiums contribute to well-lit conditions at night.

I visited the site on February 10, 2022 and met with Jeff Jerome, former director of the Poe House museum and who played a formative role in creation of the Poe Toaster observation events as they are today. The Poe monument rests just inside of the front gates of the cemetery on W. Fayette Street, visible through the iron parts of the fence and from surrounding buildings (see fig. 32). An interpretive display board rests against the wall behind the monument. The location of the monument is visible also from within the north end of the catacombs under the church, the vantage point from which the first few vigils awaiting the Poe Toaster occurred.³⁰⁰ The site is peaceful and though I witnessed a few people walking quickly through the cemetery (students, I presumed), there not many visitors that afternoon.

²⁹⁸ Joyce McClay and Catharine Black, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form: Westminster Presbyterian Church and Cemetery" (Maryland Historical Trust, September 1974).

²⁹⁹ Jerome.

³⁰⁰ Jerome.



Figure 32. The Poe monument, on the campus of the University of Maryland at Baltimore and steps from busy West Fayette Street in downtown Baltimore, Maryland. [Amy Weber; February 10, 2022]

History

Westminster Presbyterian church was built over the existing Western Burying Ground in 1852 after an ordinance was passed prohibiting cemeteries within the city limits that were not adjacent to a church building.³⁰¹ As such, the church mainly exists to preserve the older cemetery, which dates to the 18th century and serves as the resting place for many people important to history of Baltimore and Maryland.

Edgar Allan Poe, American horror writer, died under mysterious circumstances in 1849. Poe's original headstone was placed in the wrong spot, so that for twenty-six years, Poe's body

³⁰¹ McClay and Black.

rested “nameless and unmarked” in another location of the cemetery (see fig. 33).³⁰² An 1875 fundraising effort including students at the Western Female High School and Baltimore City College earned enough money for a proper monument at the Poe family plot, under which Poe was reinterred under the more substantial current monument.³⁰³



Figure 33. Marker indicating the location of Poe’s original interment along with the date of his original burial and the date his remains were transferred to the family plot where the large monument currently stands. [Amy Weber; February 10, 2022]

³⁰² May Garretson Evans, “Facts About Mistake in Marking Original Burying Place of Poe,” *The Baltimore Sun*, August 1, 1920, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

³⁰³ “The Poet Edgar Allan Poe: Dedication of a Monument to His Memory,” *The Baltimore Sun*, November 18, 1875, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Beginning in 1949, a mysterious figure began visiting Poe's grave during the night every year on Poe's birthday (January 19).³⁰⁴ The cloaked visitor arrived at the site after midnight and, after drinking a toast to Mr. Poe, left the remainder of a bottle of cognac and three roses at the foot of the marker. Local media dubbed this visitor the Poe Toaster and the tradition continued for sixty years. In 2010, the Poe Toaster did not appear, nor again in 2011. In 2012, approximately eight "toasters" appeared, including a female toaster and one who arrived driving a hearse, which while this conjures a fairly humorous situation, it does speak to how much people value the tradition.³⁰⁵ The next year, and for the next several, there was no visit from the Poe Toaster, although dedicated spectators still gathered to see if he would appear. Incidentally, the last visit in 2009 coincided with the bicentennial of Poe's birth. The identity of the original Poe Toaster was never revealed.

Legends

Though doubtlessly the spooky nature of the stories Poe penned contribute to the overall vibe, in the case of the Poe grave, the legend takes the distinctive form of the mysterious Poe Toaster. In the late 1970s, Jeff Jerome, long-time Poe grave tour guide and former curator of the Poe House, said he stumbled on an article from the 1950s that mentioned the peculiar visits in an offhand way while conducting research about Poe.³⁰⁶ Wondering if the visits still occurred, he visited the site the night of Poe's birthday the next year and while he didn't get to observe the Poe Toaster conduct his visit, he found enough evidence to invite two friends to join him the next year in vigil with hopes to see the Poe Toaster in action.³⁰⁷ This time, from the shadows of the catacombs, Jerome and his friends observed a mysterious figure enter the site, offer a toast, and leave the bottle and roses. From this point, attendance at the annual event grew, initially by word of mouth, then eventually through local, and in some cases national, media.³⁰⁸ Each year, a small group of spectators would often gather at the site on the prescribed evening to see if they could catch a glimpse of the Poe Toaster. In the early 1990s, *Life* magazine published an article about the Poe Toaster that was accompanied by a blurry photo of the Toaster in the midst of his ritual. Jerome claims that after that, the numbers of spectators exploded.

Legend Tripping

³⁰⁴ Blank and Puglia

³⁰⁵ Jerome.

³⁰⁶ Jerome.

³⁰⁷ Jerome. It seems that during Jerome's initial "stakeout," the Poe Toaster visited when Jerome had left the site briefly to answer nature's call. When he returned to his post, he found the cognac and roses at the base of the monument but the Toaster was gone.

³⁰⁸ Jerome.

Legend trips to Westminster Hall and Cemetery revolve around witnessing the spectacle of the mysterious Poe Toaster. The ostensive behavior is visiting the site on a specific night – Poe’s birthday (January 19) – and waiting to experience the extraordinary event in the form of the appearance of a mysterious figure engaging in his own performance or ostensive behavior and disappearing into the night. While the legend trip does not involve the supernatural (except in the connection to Poe and his writing), it does involve the extraordinary in the form of a dramatic visitor whose identity remained a mystery for so long. And unlike many legend trips, the appearance of the extraordinary is fairly reliable. At the point when the annual vigils for the Poe Toaster kicked into high gear and the crowds became large enough, stewards had to begin locking the gate to keep people out of the immediate area where the Poe Toaster was performing his rituals and to prevent anyone from trying to “capture” the Toaster to discern his identity. On a few occasions, some attendees attempted to climb fence.³⁰⁹ These matters were all handled by calling campus police.

Fortunately for site stewards, legend trips to see the Poe Toaster currently fall into the “little or no damage” end of the legend tripping spectrum. Jerome stated that he has found burned votive candles and other small trinkets on occasion, and most often at the site of Poe’s original burial. In the late 1980s there was a higher incident of legend trips to the site, especially after the area bars closed. Visitors would attempt to scale the fence to access the site. During that time frame “Insomniac Tours” were available in the city that stopped at various sites during the night would often visit the Poe grave. Jerome feels that, overall, people seem to have lost interest in accessing the site after hours. The high fence, bright lights from streetlamps and surrounding buildings, campus security officers and security cameras on surrounding buildings may contribute to the feeling that it isn’t worth the effort.³¹⁰ Regardless, he still sits in watch the night before Poe’s birthday (in addition to attending the events on the night of) to make sure no one tries to scale the fence.

When it became evident that the original Poe Toaster was no longer making his annual visit, the Maryland Historical Society decided to find a way to continue the tradition in a way that was more accessible to the public. In fact, they held a contest to select the new Poe Toaster. Although some objected to the idea of auditioning new “talent” to replace such an organic and mysterious figure, a new Toaster was ultimately selected – and this one plays the violin!³¹¹ On the night of the new Toaster’s debut, Jerome estimates nearly two hundred people attended the event. In this way, the Poe Toaster phenomenon continues but in more representational, honorary way; one that allows it to be made more accessible to the public.³¹² In fact, the site has leveraged the Poe Toaster legend and created curated events with family friendly times.

³⁰⁹ Jerome.

³¹⁰ Jerome.

³¹¹ Jerome.

³¹² Jerome.

One could argue that the Poe Toaster phenomenon is not a legend trip, but after much consideration I believe that it is. While on the surface it may seem that the Poe Toaster doesn't fit the format of the other legend trip destinations included herein because the public (the legend trippers) are not engaging in a performance illicit a supernatural incident that may or may not happen, they are engaging in a performance to witness the extraordinary. I argue that the Poe Toaster event can be considered an example of how certain legend trip sites may be able to promote and contain their stories, create events to leverage their legends and give the community an authorized outlet or means by which to experience the legend trip. Certainly, this approach will not work for all legend trip destinations, but those that also have contained (a few nights a year without significant physical impacts) legend trip impacts could use the Poe Toaster event as a model for strategies to engage with relevant communities in new ways.

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