



Legends and Lore of Illinois

Greenwood Cemetery, Decatur

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From the Author

The first issue of *Legends and Lore of Illinois* premiered to an audience of crickets, it seemed, and made a splash somewhat akin to a ... pebble... being dropped in a really large toilet. But in this age of media saturation, what are the odds that something of this quality will make it to the light of day? Far be it from me to speculate.

However, that will not deter The Fallen from their quest to find the truth behind these often dark and cimmerian locations.

When we last left off, The Fallen had *discovered* the remains of a house foundation in the woods near Bachelor's Grove. This time they journey southwards to the very heart of Illinois, where they hope to uncover the mystery of the secret tunnels of Decatur's Greenwood Cemetery without loosing any valuables in the process.

I'm forced to give a shout out to Troy Taylor. Without his work, I would never have heard of this location, or the circumstances surrounding its haunting. His book *Haunted Decatur Revisited* has been invaluable. There is much, much more information in there than I can provide here.

But with that being said, let's pour a fody on the curb to commemorate the Fallen.

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Your Letters

We received no e-mails about our last issue! So to fill space, here is the same thing we had the last time...

In subsequent issues, we hope to print your letters commenting on what you have read. Only the best (shortest) letters will be published. Here is an example of the kinds of letters we're expecting:

Legends and Lore of Illinois,
Your electronic serial is an inspiration to us all. Your word usage is amazing. I am personally going to wallpaper my cell with it.

Bud, Joliet State Prison

Please e-mail your letters to thefallen2@gmail.com



Decatur can be seen from this northeastern hill.

A Quick and Dirty Guide to Greenwood Cemetery

Greenwood Cemetery is rumored to be one of the most haunted locations in central Illinois. According to Troy Taylor, a popular author on haunted locations in the Midwest, the land that would become Greenwood was originally an Amerindian burial ground, and then was later used by the first white settlers to bury their dead until the late 1830s. These graves have since disappeared. The oldest visible marker on the grounds dates back to 1840, and Greenwood Cemetery was officially established in 1857. Between 1900 and 1926, the cemetery was the premier location to be buried in Decatur, but by the end of the '30s the cemetery association ran out of money and the grounds were barely maintained.

In 1957 the city of Decatur took over ownership of the cemetery in an effort to save it, but they estimated that repairs would cost around \$100,000. Volunteers gathered, and after much effort, the cemetery was restored. However, vandals plagued the grounds, and rumors circulated regarding ghost lights and eerie sounds that emanated from the old public mausoleum. In an effort to control who went in and out of the cemetery, the city sealed two of the three entrances and closed a road that ran through the woods west of the cemetery.

The public mausoleum was a failed project from the start. Built in 1908, poor construction led to leaks and subsidence in the walls. Rumors soon spread that visitors occasionally heard strange sounds coming from inside, including screams. In 1957 the building was declared unsafe, closed, and completely removed a decade later. The foundation of the building can still be seen just beneath the grass.

According to Troy Taylor, there are many stories regarding the lost souls of Greenwood Cemetery. One of the most interesting concerns the ghosts of dead and dying Confederate prisoners who were dumped at the cemetery on their way to a prison camp and buried in the hillside under what is now a memorial to Union soldiers. Years later, heavy rain collapsed part of the hill, mixing the bodies together. The hill was repaired and the bodies reburied, but many believe their spirits were permanently disturbed.

Another popular legend concerns the so-called "Greenwood Bride," who wanders the grounds in her wedding dress searching for her fiancé, who was murdered by fellow bootleggers. Greenwood Cemetery is also

haunted by phantom funerals, ghost lights that flicker in the southeastern hills, and other, more sinister apparitions. Old mine shafts are also said to exist beneath the cemetery. Rumors of collapsed graves and strange protrusions in the lawn add fuel to that legend.

Despite the manicured condition of the cemetery today, vandalism does still occur. Twelve years ago, miscreants opened the crypt of George Wessels and pulled his casket out. Unfortunately for them, his casket featured a glass covering, and they were treated with a sight they will never forget.

The Fallen conducted several investigations at Greenwood Cemetery, but for a more in-depth look at the history and hauntings of this interesting location, visit www.prairieghosts.com on the web.



This is currently the only entrance to the cemetery.



Ghost lights are said to roam these hills.

The Fallen — Investigation file 002

The Fallen's 1991 dark blue Toyota Corolla pattered through the white, metal gates of Greenwood Cemetery with Mike, Greg, Aurelia, and Emmer inside. Their rusted muffler hung inches from the road.

"Did anyone notice that it smelled like rotten eggs on the way in here?" Emmer asked over a remix of calliope music that blared from the car speakers.

"I don't know what was worse," Greg interrupted, "Mike screaming at anyone who wasn't going over 65mph or the fact that we had to listen to the Insane Clown Posse all the way down here."

"Alright just calm down," Mike instructed the two as he steered the car down a side trail that ran through a cluster of mausoleums.

Greg ignored him. "Where is Davin again?"

"He said he refused to go on any of these trips until it got warmer," Mike explained. "Luckily I can message him on my cell phone if we need him to look anything up for us."

Their Corolla crested a ridge and broke into the open. A wide valley spread out before them, and the character of the cemetery seemed to abruptly change. At the bottom of the hill, adjacent to a row of leafless bushes, sat a crisp, black van with the letters "PC-PRS" painted on the side. A team of six men and women wearing identical t-shirts stood on a patch of lawn and appeared to be scanning the area with sophisticated technology, followed by a television camera.

"Damn it!" Mike cursed and struck the steering wheel with the palm of his hand. "I don't believe this. How could the Pan-Continental Paranormal Research Society know we were going to be here today?"



The Barrackman Staircase.

"It's a coincidence," Emmer suggested. "How many of these places are there? We have to learn how to share."

"Shut up," Mike replied bitterly, and he pulled the steering wheel sharply to the right. "We're going back up into this terraced area. I don't want to deal with them today."

"Is there anything up here?" Aurelia asked from the back seat. "Let me text Davin."

Mike: Davin, get online and see if anything is haunted in this hilly area.

[>/LoRdOfDarKnesS<]: Let me get out of bed first.

"What's he saying?" Greg demanded to know.

"He has to get out of bed first." Mike set his phone down in the change tray and steered the car around a sharp curve. The phone buzzed after a few moments.

[>/LoRdOfDarKnesS<]: Okay. Head up the road a little wayz. You're going to see a cement staircase with the name Barrackman on it.

Mike: What's the story behind it?

[>/LoRdOfDarKnesS<]: Hang on.

"We don't have all day here," Greg interrupted. "Tell him to hurry up."

[>/LoRdOfDarKnesS<]: Okay. There isn't much online,

Investigation file:
Greenwood Cemetery
Decatur, Illinois
February 11, 2007

Time: 12:30pm
Temperature: 43F
Weather: Cloudy, calm

Reported Sightings:
Legendary tunnels, Grave desecration, "Ghost bride", phantom funerals, Ghost lights, civil war soldiers, other full torso vapors

Our Findings:
Ran into the PCPRS again, recorded some possible EVPs, but nothing appeared on the pictures



Evidence of past vandalism.

but according to this book, a woman in a dress appears on the stairs at sundown. No one knows why.

"He says he read in a book that there's a staircase up here where the ghost of a woman appears," Mike informed everyone as he jerked the steering wheel to the left and then screeched to a halt as he nearly flew past the short, moldy steps labeled 'Barrackman,' which were set into a slight ridge at a three-way intersection.

"Is this it?" Aura asked.

"I guess so," Mike replied. "It doesn't look very haunted." He closed his cell phone and slid it into the pocket of his cargo pants.

"It was in a book," Greg shot in from the back seat. "Anything in a book has to be true. Like Jurassic Park."

The four opened the Toyota's doors in unison, then slammed them shut and positioned themselves around the staircase.

"Are you going to tell me when the ghosts get here?" Emmer asked sarcastically.

Greg ignored the comment and turned towards Mike. "Get the instrument out," he urged. "Let's see if it picks anything up."

Mike reached into the pocket of his trench coat and produced a small crystal that hung from the end of a black string. He dangled it over the staircase and it began moving. "My hand is shaking," he said in a characteristically monotone voice. "It's too cold out."

He looked over at Aurelia, who appeared to be deep in thought. "Aura," he shouted. "Ask your spirit guide if there are any other ghosts here."

"You mean her imaginary friend that she made up because her boyfriend is in jail again?" Emmer interrupted.

"I don't want to talk about him right now," Mike growled.

Aurelia stuck her nose in the air and turned her head with a defiant snap. "Humph!" she angrily exhaled.

"Great, look at what you did," Greg said with a poorly concealed laugh.

"Alright, fine," Emmer grudgingly replied. He removed his blue Chicago Cubs hat and folded the rim. "Sorry."

"Aura," Mike yelled again. "Please. We need your help."

Aurelia sighed and placed her hands on her wide hips. "Give me a second. You distracted me."

Emmer rolled his eyes while Aurelia concentrated. After a few minutes, she spoke. "He says the woman is lonely. She wants to get home but she can't. She feels rejected by everyone and afraid because the other spirits ignore her."

"She's kind of like one of us," Mike interrupted. "The Fallen."

Greg and Emmer both laughed.

"Alright, what else is here?" Emmer asked. "I hope we didn't drive all this way just to look at some old stairs."

"What about those tunnels we read about," Greg suggested. "Let's go over there."



The unfortunate crypt of George Wessels.

The four piled back into their car and drove to the top of the hill, where the statue of a woman overlooked a trimmed lawn filled with rows of nearly identical headstones.

Mike stopped the car and got out. His three compatriots followed him. "This looks like where those Civil War ghosts are seen," he announced. "Let's leave the tape recorder here while we look for the entrance to these tunnels." He produced a small recorder out of the pocket of his trench coat and placed it on top of one of the stones, while Greg snapped some pictures.

Suddenly, Aurelia called out from the edge of the hill. "I found something!" she screamed.

Mike, Greg, and Emmer rushed to her side and peered into the valley that lay beneath the steep slope. At the end of a long, straight ridge, behind the cemetery fence, a broad, brick chimney jutted from the ground. A manhole lid covered the top.

"Good work," Mike said. "Now how are we going to get down there?"

"Looks like there's only one easy way," Emmer said with a grin. He jumped off of the edge, barely landed on the soles of his shoes, and slid the remainder of the way down. The rest of the Fallen hesitantly followed him, until all four stood facing the chain link fence and the suspicious ridge of grass.



This crypt has been sealed, and is rumored to lead into the underground tunnels.

"Well, this is a pickle," Greg muttered. "Are we going to climb the fence?"

"It wouldn't be too hard," Emmer replied.

"It looks like that manhole has been cemented shut," Aurelia cut in. "Maybe we can dig into the tunnel from here."

"Yeah, that's a great idea," Greg sardonically retorted. "Let's dig into the tunnel."

Mike kicked some of the dirt away with his boot and struck something hard. "There are bricks under this grass," he announced from the top of the ridge. "I think they're loose." He kicked downward, and suddenly his foot broke through the wall. He almost fell down in surprise, but kept his balance, then carefully withdrew his foot. A potent, musty odor spewed forth.

"I would move if I were you," Aura prophetically warned as suddenly half a dozen large, brown rats poured from the opening and screamed in anger.

Mike jerked away and began running back up the hill towards the car, followed closely by the rest of the group.

"We can't just leave," Greg protested between heavy breaths as the four collapsed around the base of a cannon that was nestled among the Civil War graves.

"I ain't going down in there," Aurelia yelled.

"She's right," Mike said. "Maybe next time. For now, let's just see if anything comes up on these tapes."

To be Continued...

True! Amazing! Unbelievable! Personal Experiences

The first time I went to Greenwood Cemetery I didn't know what to expect. I got lost trying to find it, and I was afraid I would wind up as a ghost for my effort! But luckily I stumbled on the gates just as a gang of youths surrounded my car. They didn't follow me in because I think they were scared off by the rumors surrounding the cemetery. Who knows?

All I know is that I came to see some of those spook lights and I got more than I bargained for! I parked my car by the grassy area where that old mausoleum use to be and waited until sundown. I was about to leave, when suddenly something like a flash appeared across the road and bounced around the headstones. I don't know how fast it was going, but I didn't have time to react when it zoomed towards me and disappeared just as it came near my headlights! To this day I still can't believe what happened!

Paul, 31, Springfield

Me and my homies were chillin' on Grant Street with a couple of hoes, you know, jut drinkin' and shit. We decided to do somethin' fun, somethin' we ain't done in a while. So my bro says to me "T-Bag,"— that's wut he calls me. "T-bag, remember when we was kids and we used to hang down in the cemetery?" I said, "yeah." Then he remembers me a story about one time when we wuz both about 11 and we went up to Greenwood to see who would get scared first. This wuz



The outline of the former public mausoleum can be seen in an otherwise picturesque lawn.



A more likely entrance to the tunnels.

back in the day when we wuz foolish. Anyway, we jumped the fence at night and walked through those stones, you know, the ones next to the crypts. Anyway, my bro and I sees this guy standing near a tree, we couldn't make out who it wuz but he wuz all in black. Shit, I thought it cause we were high, but we both saw it! The guy turns around and disappears just like dat! I tell yea, we didn't run like sissies.

Steve, 15, Decatur

Please stop telling lies and fabrications about me. I did not drown myself in the river because that lazy oaf got himself killed. I was going to break off the engagement. Do you know how much a bootlegger actually makes? Scantly more than to put food on the table, and that bastard gambled it away. And what kind of job is that for a father to have anyway?

Truth is I drowned trying to find out if it was true when they told me he turned up in the river. I wanted to make sure that SOB was dead! Unfortunately there had been a lot of rain that year and I slipped on the mud and fell in. But that by God is the real story!

The Greenwood Ghost Bride

That ungrateful *edit* is lying. She wanted me back. How could someone not be attracted to the allure of bootlegging? Let's be realistic. If those guys hadn't killed me, I'd be swimming in *edit* instead of the river. Anyway, she's the one stuck roaming around a cemetery, not me.

The Ghost Bride's Former Fiancé