

# Legends Of The Ozarks

by Van Beydler

Legends of the Ozarks are far fetched and imaginative and one wonders where some of these stories had their beginnings. Were they based on some true mysterious fact or the result of late night story telling around a campfire. No one really knows for sure. Here are a few of these legends and we'll leave it up to you to decide if you believe them or not.

## The Legend of the Moving Gravestone of West Plains

The legend goes that in the early 1900s, a Halloween Dance was held at the old court house. The boys and girls all came in their Sunday best. The social event was going along at full force and all were having a great time. A workman was in the basement working on some gas lines while the party was going on. An explosion occurred that was so powerful that the building collapsed upon itself. Workers rushed to the scene to pull both living and dead from the ruins.

The toll was terrible as many died and some were so mutilated that they could not be identified. The

unidentified persons were all buried very close together and a big tombstone with all the names of the boys and girls were written on the gravestone. Many people have reported seeing the gravestone move as if by some unseen force. It is said that the gravestone of West Plains moves because the young boys and girls who were killed that night long ago at the Halloween Dance are still dancing in their graves.

Dortha Revis of West Plains explains the moving phenomenon this way. The stone is near some railroad tracks and the vibrations from the trains was so great that the tombstone moves off its base every year or two and they have to put it back to keep it from falling over.

## The Legend of the Phantom Brakeman

Legend has it that a ghostly brakeman signals a train that never shows. The location is unknown but people have reportedly been at a railroad crossing after dark when in the distance they can catch a glimpse of something swaying slowly back and forth and coming nearer.

As it comes closer, it is

the appearance of a brakeman's lantern slowly waving to and fro, as if signaling a train. The light moves closer and closer to the crossing and disappears just as it reaches the crossing.

## The Legend of Cry Baby Hollow

Just outside of Crocker is a place that has a legend which is told in many different stories. One of the earliest stories relates that a young Indian maiden was travelling through a blinding snowstorm to rejoin her tribe. She became lost in the snowstorm and was trying to keep the bundle she carried close to her. In the bundle was her baby.

The Indian stumbled through the countryside, only to collapse in a hollow where she and the baby died. It is said that on dark nights in the hollow, the sound of a baby can be heard crying for its mother.

Another variation has it that a party was going on at the hollow which had a creek running through it. A baby was in a crib near the water's edge when the crib collapsed, throwing the baby out. The baby could be heard crying for its mother but the search for

the infant turned up nothing.

The mother was led away screaming for her child and the sound of a baby crying for its mother still can be heard in Cry Baby Hollow. Still yet another story has it that a young mother could not support her child and could not stand to see it starve so she murdered the infant and then took her own life in the hollow.

## The Legend of the Blood Stained Carpet

This legend also comes from the Crocker area. Supposedly a cabin is high on a bluff back in the woods and is hard to reach even with today's four wheel all terrain vehicles. The cabin was once inhabited by a man, his wife and their children. The man went crazy and killed his family with an axe in a bloody attack. He then reportedly shot himself in the head to atone for his grisly deed.

The cabin was sold and fixed up by the new owners who were disturbed when they discovered a large red stain showing through their newly laid carpet. No amount of cleaning could remove the blood mark and the home was abandoned.

## The Legend of Bloodland

Bloodland was a small community that was in this area of the Ozarks before the coming of Fort Leonard Wood. It was one of the communities that was almost totally erased from the map when the post became a reality. However, Bloodland Cemetery still stands. Legend has it that a ghost bearing wine visits Bloodland Cemetery on Fort Leonard Wood every Halloween.

One story had it that several soldiers were posted outside of the cemetery to prevent any vandalism. One soldier was greeted by a man bearing wine who shared his drink with him. The soldier was discovered drunk and was thrown into the stockade. He appealed to his superiors that he was approached by this ghostly figure but no one listened. That is, until it happened again the next year to another soldier.

## The Lost Violinist

This is only a fragment of an old legend that has been repeated so many generations that the participants have lost their identity. Just which cave

was involved is also not known.

One day a violinist, who had often heard how the rocky walls of the cavern would echo, decided to see how his violin would sound in a cave. A group of friends went with him and remained near the mouth of the cave to listen while the violinist went into the cavern. They listened to the music as it echoed and re-echoed from wall to wall. Then it stopped. They waited, expecting the player to appear shortly, but he did not come.

After waiting a reasonable length of time, they began to search for him. The search went on for days, and for days they could hear the wild, eerie music echoing through the caverns in such a cacophony of jumbled sound that it was impossible to tell from whence it came. They thought he must be playing in the hope that the sound would guide them to him, but the sound was bouncing back and forth from the serrated walls of limestone in macabre cacophony of echoes mockingly defying the searchers.

The lost violinist, according to legend, was never found.

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