

Urban Legends

Article Credit: [Southwest Ghost Hunters Association](#)

Phantom Hitchhikers

One of the most persistent and entertaining types of ghost stories is that of the phantom or vanishing hitchhiker. It's also one of the most chilling because, if true, they bring ghosts in very close contact with mortals. More disconcerting still, the stories depict the specters as looking, acting, and sounding like living people - even physically interacting with the unsuspecting drivers who pick them up.

The basic story usually goes something like this: a weary driver traveling at night picks up a strange hitchhiker, drops him or her off at some destination, then somehow later finds out that the hitchhiker had in fact died months or years earlier - often on that very same date. Like most "true" ghost stories, tales of phantom hitchhikers are impossible to verify, and are most often relegated to the category of urban legend or folklore. But there are many such stories, and it's up to you whether or not you believe any of them. Here are a few:

The Girl on the Side of the Road "The Vanishing Hitchhiker" Relates the story of one Dr. Eckersall who, while driving home from a country club dance, picks up a lovely young girl dressed in a sheer evening gown. She climbs into the back seat of the car, because his front passenger seat is crowded with golf clubs, and gives him an address to take her to. As he arrives at the address, he turns to speak to her - and she is gone. The curious doctor rings the doorbell of the address given to him by the mysterious girl. A gray-haired man answers the door and reveals that the girl was his daughter who died in a car accident nearly two years ago.

A very similar story is known as The Greensboro Hitchhiker

The Basketball Player

Docia Schultz Williams relates phantom hitchhiker tales of West Texas, including the young woman who haunts a stretch of road near the Pecos River. It's a winter evening in Oklahoma in 1965. Mae Doria, driving to her sister's house from Tulsa to Pryor, sees a boy of about 11 or 12 hitchhiking on the side of the road. She stops for him, he gets into the front seat along side of her, and they make idle chatter as they make their way down Highway 20. In their conversation, the boy says that he's a basketball player for a local school, and Mae reckons that indeed he has the height and build of an athlete. She also notices that he is not wearing a jacket of any kind, despite the fact that it's winter. And the boy seemed to have no particular destination in mind. He points to a culvert on the side of the road and asks to be let out there. Mae is puzzled because there are no houses or lights anywhere in sight. Before she can even pull over, however, the youth simply vanishes from the car. Mae immediately stops the car, gets out, and looks around, but

there is no sign of the boy. Mae later learns in a chance conversation with a utility worker that the same phantom hitchhiker was first picked up at the same spot in 1936 - 29 years earlier!

Resurrection Mary

The story of Resurrection Mary is considered one of “the most famous ghosts in Chicagoland.”

The story begins on another winter night in 1934 when a young girl was killed in an auto accident while on her way home from the O. Henry Ballroom on Archer Avenue in Justice, Ill., a suburb of Chicago. Five years later, in 1939, a cab driver picks up a young girl in a white gown on Archer Avenue. She sits in the front seat and instructs him to drive north on Archer. After driving a short distance, she suddenly tells him to stop... and simply vanishes from the cab. The cab is stopped in front of Resurrection Cemetery, where the girl is buried. According to a 1977 account, a woman may have seen Mary locked inside the iron fence of the cemetery. Reportedly, the metal bars bore the imprints of her hands. According to the Northwest Indiana Society of Ghost Research, the girl's name was actually Elizabeth Wilson, and the cemetery she's buried in is actually called Ross Cemetery. The group even has unusual photos taken at the graveyard.

The Smoking Ghost

On a night in February, 1951, a British officer stops for a fellow soldier hitchhiking on the road. The stranger is dressed in a Royal Air Force uniform, and after he gets into the car with the officer, asks if he can bum a cigarette. The officer gives him one of his Camels and a lighter with which to light it. With his peripheral vision, the officer sees the flash of the lighter, but then turning his head is astonished to see that his passenger has vanished into thin air. Only the cigarette lighter remains on the seat.

The Grandmother

C.B. Colby tells the the story of the “Hitchhiker to Montgomery” in which two businessmen on their way to Montgomery, Alabama, stop for a little old lady in a lavender dress walking on the side of the road in the middle of the night. She tells them she is going to see her daughter and granddaughter, and they offer to drive her to the next town. On the way, she proudly tells them all about her children and grandchildren, their names, where they live, and so on. After a while, the men become engrossed in their own business conversation, and when they reach their destination, the old woman has vanished from the back seat. Fearing the worst, the men retrace their route, but do not find the woman anywhere. Finally, recalling the daughter's name, they go to her house in Montgomery to report what might have been a horrible accident. The men identify her from photos in the woman's house. But as it happens, the old woman was buried just three years ago that day.

Other stories with "Urban Legend" Roots

The Pink Lady

I was on vacation with my parents when I had my encounter with a ghost. We were in North Carolina staying in this hotel called the Grove Park Inn, which has existed since the early 1900's. I was 15 at the time. Up until this point I had never really considered the fact that ghosts existed. I knew about them, but never believed. It was our 2nd day at the hotel and I was in their store with my mother. We found this book that talked about the Inn's resident spirit. It was a woman called the Pink Lady. The legend is that she threw herself from the 5th floor balcony in the 1920s. So mom and I decided to go ghost hunting. It was close to 11:30 when we went to where her room was. The balcony was just outside the door to room. Mom and I were coming off the elevator and we were heading towards her door when I felt cold all of a sudden. The hair on the back of my neck stood up and I got goosebumps. My mom said she did not feel anything. She then said that she should take my picture in front of the Pink Lady's room. I was leaning against the door frame when I then felt myself being pulled against the door itself. I got very nervous and told my mother to take the picture quickly because I wanted to get away from there. As soon as she took it, I ran to the elevator and did not look back. Inside the elevator my mom said I looked as white as a sheet. I never went back there. I am still not a complete believer, but I think I have more respect for ghosts now. One more thing, the picture never came out. Makes you wonder.

The Household Poltergeist

We have had several houses that strange things happened. When I was 17, we lived in a trailer in Cut-n-shoot TX. One day I was laying across the bed reading a book, when I heard someone play the piano for just a few seconds. I had 3 younger siblings, so I paused for a moment, listened and started reading again. Then I remembered that no-one else was home so I got up and went to look. There was no-one there, and we had no pets. I wasn't scared though, so I just went back to reading. After our family moved, we rented it to a friend of my parents. She started saying it was haunted, and that she heard footsteps, and saw shadows etc. After she moved out my brother and his wife moved in. I was married by then and had a son. I went to visit them and they set me up in my old bedroom. That night when I laid down I kept feeling like someone was watching me. It was a very evil presence. My son was asleep and I felt rather stupid, like I was letting my imagination run away with me.....but I couldn't shake it. I had to leave the light on, and read until I finally fell asleep.

Later I related these things to my parents and they told me that they had had several things happen while we lived there, but they didn't tell us about them because they didn't want us to be afraid to live there. My Dad said one night everyone was asleep, and he woke up and heard the water running in our bathroom (it was right next to my bedroom). He thought "who in the world is taking a bath this time of night" so he got up and walked down the hall. We were all asleep in our beds, but the bath tub water was running full blast. Another time he and my Mom were sitting in the living room watching TV and we had crystal salt and pepper shakers on the table, suddenly they just fell over. One day I

had stayed home from school and my Mom was taking a nap. Suddenly I heard her making a funny noise so I went in to check on her. She was still asleep, but she wasn't breathing and she was thrusting around like she was trying to get air. I started shaking her, and she sat up and took a big gasp of air. She said she was asleep, and felt a heavy evil air, and that it started suffocating her. I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't been home.

The Lady in White

As a child my grandmother use to tell me about the lady at the phone. My granddaddy was born with a veil over his face. A veil is when a baby is born and they still have a thick mucus mask on their face. The old timers use to say when a baby was born like that they could see things that other people couldn't see. Well about forty years ago my grandparents were asleep in their bed when my granddaddy was awaken by a white figure of a woman dressed in white, she was standing outside their bedroom doorway in the hallway by the phone that hung on the wall in the hallway. My aunt was about three years old and she was asleep on a cott bed in my grandparents room. My granddaddy couldn't believe his eyes, all he could do was stare at the woman figure in the hallway. My granddaddy said that the woman looked as if she was trying to call for help. Then the woman walked into their bedroom and she stood at the foot of the cott bed where my aunt was fast asleep.

The little dog was laying on the foot of the cott bed also. The dog started to barking and woke up my grandmom, she couldn't see anything only my granddaddy could see the figure. The woman bent down as if to kiss my aunt on the forehead. My granddad was shaken at that point and he reached for the lamp on the nightstand, as he turned on the lamp the figure vanished into thin air. He was so shaken up at what he saw until he layed awake for hours afterward. The next morning they were awaken by a sudden phone call. My granddaddy's aunt fell into the big open fireplace. She had got cold in the middle of the night and tried to light a fire and she must have lost her balanced and fell in. At that moment my granddad knew he had saw her, she was the figure in the hallway trying to call for help. Till this day when my grandmom tells the story of the lady in white it still sends chills up my spine and from that night the little dog never slept in that room again.

The San Antonio Ghost

Here is my story. This is a true story; it happened to me and some family and friends... Read on! In 1981 or 82 (I cannot remember the exact year) my grandmother died. She and my grandfather had lived in a townhouse in Chicago previous to this. We then brought my paralyzed grandfather down to San Antonio to live with us. We purchased the house behind us and fixed it up so that my grandfather would have a house of his own while making it easily accessible to us so we could take care of him. A couple months before his death in 1983, we moved my grandfather into our house, because it was getting too hard to provide him with the necessary care unless one of us was with him almost 24 hours a day. We rented his house out to some friends of the family. While Grandpa was alive, they claimed to hear his cat meowing in his old room, even though we had moved

the cat into our house with him. Later, after my grandfather had died, every once in a while you could hear footsteps in that room and also up and down the hallway of the house. It was really freaky. Another thing that happened had to do with a clock. When we moved my grandfather to San Antonio, we brought a lot of his furniture and things with him. We put most of this in his house, including a table clock from the late 1800's/early 1900's.

This clock usually sat on a coffee table in the living room of his house. When we moved my grandfather to our house, we left the furniture there for the family we rented the house to. The clock stayed also. The clock had never run correctly, so we never wound it up, we always left it off. After we had Grandpa moved out, in the other house every once in a while you could hear the clock chiming. BUT WE NEVER TURNED IT ON. This happened more often once my grandfather died, but the clock was heard most often in his old room in the other house. Thankfully, my house does not seem to be haunted, and finally, 11 years after his death, things are quiet in the other house too.

The Witches Grave - A popular urban myth

This may best be considered folklore, because I haven't seen anything happen myself, but my boyfriend related this story to me as HE experienced it: In a very small country town close to where we live, there is a small cemetery on the top of a hill. It is rumored that a witch is buried there. Kids used to go out there all the time to check it out and get scared. Supposedly, so did somebody else: it was supposed to be a cult gathering place. I'm not sure exactly what type of cult, but lets just say there have been a lot of pentagrams and mutilated farm animals in this area. Needless to say, the "witch's tomb," as it is referred to, has quite a reputation, even to the extent that it has been referenced by the media. Whether there is actually a witch buried there is uncertain. There are probably about a dozen grave markers, and they all belong to members of the same family. There is also a very large "monument", my guess is about fifteen feet tall, in the center that seems to be a dedication to the entire family. The cemetery is on the top of a hill at the corner of two roads. There's not too much else around--a river, creeks and lots of woods. Because it is a highly wooded area, you can not view it from the road very easily. There are two ways to get to the gravesides: you can either park along the side of one road, walk up the side of the hill through some trees and then down a ways to the markers OR you can drive off of the other road onto a worn trail for a short distance, then walk the rest of the way up the hill.

The second way is preferred: there are some trees you have to climb over, but you're a lot closer to your car and you don't have to walk back "down" towards the tomb, as you do if you approach it from the other direction. There is a streetlight at the corner of these roads, and although the trees block much of it, you do have visibility without a flashlight after you get to the tomb area. The story: About five years ago, my boyfriend and a few of his friends decided to visit the witch's tomb on Halloween. They split up into two groups, each approaching the tomb from the other direction. They were supposed to meet at the tomb area, and if anything should happen, they were supposed to meet back at the bar where they conceived this idea. The first group departed, and my boyfriend's friend

started to get a little wigged out and didn't want to go. After a few minutes of coaxing, they left. In the meantime, the first group had arrived. They were supposed to take the first approach to the tomb (parked their car along the side of the road, walked up, through the trees, then back down towards the tomb).

As my boyfriend's group was arriving, they were walking up the hill from the other direction when they heard screaming. Of course, they took off for the car and went back to the bar, FAST. When they met the other group at the bar, they found out what had happened: The first group was getting a little freaked out because they had already been there for ten minutes, waiting, so they decided they were done. When the guys were walking back DOWN the hill towards their car, one of them felt something grab at his feet and trip him. He then proceeded to scream and the other guys in his group turned around to see him being pulled by his feet UP the hill. He obviously got away... I'm not going to speculate as to whether or not this really happened, and I'm not going to make statements to the fact that there is an ominous feeling surrounding the site. You'd have to go there yourselves to make your own judgment. My boyfriend has been there ONCE since that night, and I went with him. To me, it was scary. I did not feel safe, I did feel watched, and there are tangible things about the place that seemed really strange.

For example, why is this family buried in this spot (the grave markers are dated around the 1880's) and not in an ordinary cemetery? There are plenty of them around, all older than this one. And it seems that this must have been a prominent family, to have their very own cemetery, for one thing, and to have a huge monument and a couple of marble tombstones must have been fairly expensive. So why does it lie isolated on top of a hill, surrounded by trees? Why doesn't anyone from the town know anything about these people? And how in the hell did the two marble tombstones, both four feet tall, get split in exactly the same spot with a very, very clean break (in other words, even if someone took a saw to them, they couldn't have been broken so perfectly, in the same spot)? Incidentally, they are not broken at the base, but about one-third of the way down. At any rate, anyone who lives around here will tell you that the witch's tomb is not the type of place you go to just to hang out. And if there is "something" there, no one here wants to know what it is.