

A Tale for Halloween, The Bridgewater Triangle

by James Michael Rice

BRIDGEWATER—The smell of decomposing leaves. The uninvited chill in the air. The shortened hours of daylight. Yes, it's that time of year again, when the wind grows teeth, and carved-out jack o' lanterns shine their mischievous eyes in anticipation of the many witches, ghosts, and goblins who will scour the earth in search of tricks or treats. That's right, ladies and gentlemen, Halloween is just around the corner, a time when ghost stories, haunted houses, and tales of the unexplained run amuck, and if you don't believe in things that go bump in the night, then you've probably never heard of The Bridgewater Triangle.

The angles of The Bridgewater Triangle pierce the towns of Abington, Freetown, and Rehoboth. At the core of the Triangle lies a massive wetland known as

the Hockomock Swamp. Formed by a glacier some 2,500 years ago, it is the second largest swamp in New England. The Hockomock's reputation, however, is second-to-none. "Hockomock" is an old Algonquin word for "the devil", and "the place where spirits dwell", which is a rather fitting name, when one considers the reputation of the place. Much like the infamous Bermuda Triangle, The Bridgewater Triangle has had more than its fair share of unexplained phenomenon.

Some people believe the Triangle's reputation began in the late 1600s, around the time of King Philip's War. Sparked by the encroachment of the English on Native American land, Massasoit's son, Metacomet (a.k.a. King Philip), engaged in a bloody battle against the colonies. Philip and his warriors used

the Hockomock as a hiding place, from which they launched their attacks on the unsuspecting English who, even then, were hesitant to enter the swamp.

Eventually, King Philip was shot, beheaded, and quartered (that's a fancy way of saying his body was chopped into little pieces), and his head was placed on a pole and paraded around Plymouth as a warning to his followers. The war was over, but not before some 2,500 colonists and an undisclosed number of Native Americans had perished.

King Philip's body is believed to be buried somewhere south of the Triangle, while the exact whereabouts of his head, to this day, remain a mystery. According to the legend, King Philip will be unable to rest until he is given a proper burial. It has been said that his spirit appears in the form of a large black serpent, and that he will one day guide his descendents to the whereabouts of his scattered remains.

Needless to say, much blood was spilled in and around the now-infamous Hockomock Swamp, which itself seems to be the focal point for much of the reported paranormal "activity" in the area. Supportive of the legend, tales have risen of a giant black snake, which is said to appear every seven years. One such sighting was made in 1939 by a handful of Civilian Conservation Corps workers, who described the serpent as being "as round as a stovepipe". Whether or not they witnessed the spirit of King Philip, we may never know. But one thing is for certain: The Bridgewater Tri-

angle is the hub of reported paranormal activity in New England.

At one corner of the Triangle rests the fabled Dighton rock, a trapezoidal stone tablet containing the engravings of early explorers from around the globe—Chinese, Portuguese, and possibly even the Phoenicians—as well as a few mysterious, untranslatable languages and pictographs of unknown origins. How and why did so many different people come to find this out-of-the-way place? Was it the Triangle which drew them here? Why did each visitor feel it necessary to live his/her mark on Dighton rock? These are but a few of the many mysteries of the Triangle.

People from all walks of life, from experienced hunters to respected policemen, have reported bizarre sightings around the Triangle area. One cannot discount the numerous sightings of an apelike creature resembling the legendary Bigfoot, UFO's, a huge black dog with glowing red eyes, ghost lights, bird men, strange screams coming from the swamp, cattle mutilations, ghostly apparitions...the list goes on and on.

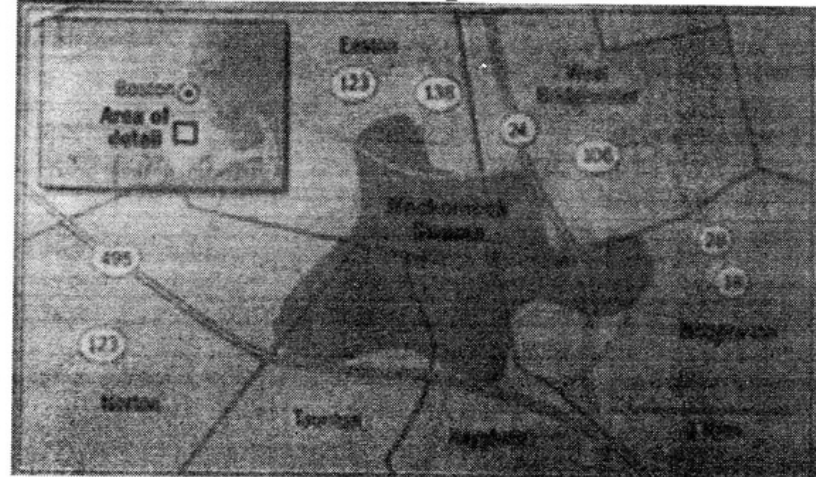
Now, for all you skeptics out there, consider this: until the early 1900s, scientists

did not believe in the existence of the Komodo dragon, the Giant Squid, or the Mountain Gorilla. A large fish known as the Coelacanth was believed to have become extinct roughly 70 million years ago until 1938, when a live specimen was caught off the coast of South Africa. Until 1976, scientists had never before laid eyes upon the giant Megamouth Shark. A hundred years ago, our forefathers would have laughed at the very thought of putting a man on the Moon, of solving crimes by means of DNA or fingerprints, of sending images and information at the speed of light over the Internet. And while these few examples may not prove the existence of ghosts, or Bigfoot, or extraterrestrials, they do support the fact that we still have a lot to learn about the world.

So, whether or not you believe in things that go bump in the night, if you're thinking about going to Spooky World—or even Salem—this Halloween, you may want to reconsider. The "Devil's Swamp" has been waiting over 2,000 years to scare the daylights out of you, and it won't even cost you a dime.



Just grab a flashlight, some hiking boots, and your imagination...and whatever you do, don't go alone!

The Hockomock Swamp



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