

The Mystery of the Green Lady Cemetery in Acadia National Park
December 15, 2017

The French first settled in this territory on Desert Island, (about 47,000 acres) in 1613. Now called Acadia National Park, in the state of Maine. Mt. Desert Island was included in a land grant from the French King, Henry IV, to Sieur de la Monte Cadillac. In 1603, the French established their first Mission in North America on Mt. Desert Island, then a part of Nova Scotia province, controlled by the French.

For a generation, the French settlers lived in peace on Mt. Desert Island. Then came the French and Indian Wars. When the British triumphed at Quebec, in 1759, Le Grande Derangement began. Approximately 45,000 catholic citizens, (called Acadians, aka Cajuns) under the supervision of the British forces, were driven from their homes, while they watched their villages burn. These people had done nothing wrong—had broken no laws. They had the unfortunate fate of being caught on the losing side of a war between the French and the British. British soldiers put the Acadians on boats and forced them to leave the French controlled region of Nova Scotia. Throughout history, we have stark examples of man’s bloody, inhumanity to their fellow man in war, for ethnic cleansing of different races, to deprive families of their rights, deprive them of their land, for all the wrong reasons. In this case the destination of the Acadians was back to France, or alternatively to the City of New Orleans, still controlled by the French. This story, made into an Historic Poem, “Evangeline” written almost a century later in 1847, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, an noted American author.

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The trip to Ontario Province in 1965 would be the last trip that we all took together as the Kuhns family. The following summer John and I would be working construction. My twin brother John and I were the oldest boys. Paul was born four years after us in September 1954, and Anne came later, in August of 1957. The two of us had already figured out how to get over on Mom and Dad, and we were teaching Paul the ropes. Anne was just a baby when we traveled to Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park.

The contractor who built the house that my parents bought in 1958 in Takoma Park, Maryland was an odd duck. He required “alone time” away from his family. First he built a paneled room in the basement, but the footsteps of his wife and children drove him crazy, so he built a small cabin on the one acre property, about 100 yards away from the house, which suited him just fine. When my brother John and I graduated from Junior High, we were old enough to use the cabin for a summer headquarters. We borrowed some lumber and supplies from nearby construction sites, and renovated the cabin. By the time we finished, the cabin had electricity for lights, a refrigerator, and a hotplate for cooking. The cabin, which we called the Sugar Shack after the 1963 song by Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs, slept four, in two bunk beds.

It would become headquarters for our juvenile mischief, and destruction of property in the neighborhood. No property within a two-mile radius was untouched by our pranks. I won't go into our crimes in this story, because that is a tale for another day. But after each summer, when John and I returned to school in the fall, we felt superior to our fellow class mates, because we hadn't been caught, and we hadn't died.

Our younger brother Paul was a different personality. He was an innocent. Unlike each of us, he had fair skin, blonde hair, and light blue eyes. He sang in the church choir, and went to Sunday school, which pleased our mother to no end. He was loved by everyone who ever met him. He could do no wrong.

John and I took him under our wing from the time he was 10 years old, to instill in him the ways of the world. It was hard work for us. By the time we got through with him, he was a seasoned criminal.

But the summer we went to Ontario Province in 1965, Paul was just eleven years old, still unseasoned and innocent.

The whole family was traveling in my father's new Volkswagon van, on a camping trip to Canada. One night we stayed in Acadia National Park. In typical fashion, our father pulled into the campground at twilight, just before dark. Our mother started to build a fire with some sticks that were readily available. She knew that Dad would want something to eat after the long drive. She needed heavier logs to keep the fire going, while she cooked the family meal of ground beef and beans. So she sent the three of us boys into the forest to gather logs for the fire. There was plenty of firewood in the forest, just a few hundred yards from the campsite. She told us to each gather as much as we could carry. So we all set out to find an arm-load of logs, before we returned to the campsite. There was a barely traveled path that we could see, leading into the forest. But as the sun went down, the last of daylight trickled away. We could no longer see the path back to the campsite. That was the first problem. The second problem was that Acadia National Park was on an Island, surrounded by ocean. No matter what direction we chose to travel, the constant noise of crashing waves was disorienting. The forest was very thick, so we could not see the stars above in night sky. No matter what direction we chose to walk, the sound of crashing waves always seemed to follow us.

After walking in circles, for about 30 minutes, we all dropped the firewood that we had gathered, and chose to walk straight toward the sound of the waves. After about two hours we came to what appeared to be a cemetery, in the middle of the forest, about half an acre in size. There was an entrance with a gate, where a single green candle, flickered, casting an eerie light over the headstones written in French with dates from the 18th century.

The cemetery was surrounded by an ancient, wrought iron fence.

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“Let’s stop and take a breather here”, John said.

“Good idea” I said, feeling that we would be safe from wild animals, inside the cemetery fence.

Just then we heard a wolf howl, close by. Paul ran in-between both of us.

“What was that”, he cried!

“Just a coyote,” John lied as he whispered, trying to reassure Paul, who by now was trembling.

But it wasn’t working, not for Paul and not for us.

The truth is that we were all scared. How I wished that we hadn’t dropped the logs that we had gathered. We could have used them as cudgels to protect ourselves. Now we had nothing, only had the cemetery fence between us, and the animals in the forest.

So, we started to tell funny stories, thinking perhaps this would calm Paul and truthfully all of us, with laughter. We told the story about the traveling salesman and the farmer’s daughter. We tried dirty limericks.

“There once was a man from Boston, who drove around in an Austin. He had room for his ass, and a gallon of gas. But his balls hung out and he lost them”

Just like bedtime stories work with small children, these funny stories were working with our brother Paul. Once or twice, I saw his eyelids flutter. The truth was that we were all tired. It appeared, at least for Paul, that tired was winning over being scared. When we finally got Paul calmed down. He laid over on the soft green moss that was between the rows of headstones, and fell asleep.

John and I sandwiched Paul to create body heat, so we could ward-off the chill from the night. And that was the last conscious thought I remember before I fell asleep.

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Paul woke up; frightened from a deep sleep, when he thought he heard a wolf howling again. But this time it was different. The howling sounded human, like a wailing lament. He tried to shake me awake but I was fast asleep. He shook John as well, with the same result. Then when he heard the noise again, it was behind him. Turning as his heart pounded in his chest, he saw an apparition. It was female, green in hue, in colonial dress, rising above him, speaking French.

{In French: “ I have been laying in this cold grave, waiting for an innocent man who is untainted by greed, lust, or dangerous and evil thoughts. Are you such a man?”}

Paul trembled, as he stared at the Green Lady that was now hovering above him, but said nothing. The specter had at one time been beautiful. But time in the grave had

ruined her features, until she was wrinkled and rotten. Paul covered his face with his hands.

“You are not real, you are not real, you are not real!” he repeated to himself.

But when he uncovered his face again the specter was still there.

This time in English, the specter spoke to him gently—through telepathy.

“I am searching for an innocent man, untainted by greed, lust or dangerous and evil thoughts. Are you that innocent man?”

“Innocent of what?” answered Paul nervous about how the Green Lady seemed to be reading his mind.

“Are you innocent, untainted by greed, lust or dangerous and evil thoughts,” repeated the Green Lady.

“If I tell you that I am innocent, will you leave me alone?”

Third time seemed to be the charm. The apparition began telling her sorrowful tale.

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“In 1742, my mother and father left France and made the trip to Nova Scotia territory. My father who had been a deacon in France, joined a catholic church not far from here, near Somesville.” After he advanced to become Deacon for that church, I was born.“

As Paul watched the specter, he alternatively covered his eyes, and then shook his head, several times. As the Green Lady narrated her story, Paul was able to see street scenes in a village, located in Somesville the 18th century. He was able to see, hear, feel and smell everything in the scene as the Green Lady told her sorrowful tale.

“In 1759, the War between French Canada and the British escalated, until finally when the British triumphed in Quebec. Then the “occupation” began. It was the time of Le Grande Derangement. The redcoats were everywhere. People in the village, including my parents and me had to wait in line and sign a registry, giving their name, age, religion and family size.

When the notice came from the British General, everyone was afraid. The British regulars posted notices on every street corner. We would be forced to leave our homes on Mt. Desert, and ride in prison wagons to the port in Bar Harbor, where all the French Catholics would be forced to board ships, and sail back to France, or New Orleans, which at that time was controlled by the French.”

“When the people of Somesville resisted, the British burned whole sections of the village. Afterword, the British regulars lined up those protesters and shot them dead.”

Paul could actually smell the acrid smoke from the fire, and he could feel the emotional pain, as the people lay dying in the street. Despite the smells and sounds, Paul was speechless, incredulous.

“What horror would come next?” he shuddered.

“On the day of our departure, the whole village marched under the baleful eyes of the British regulars. Those who couldn’t keep up were beaten down, with rifle butts, and dragged away, despite the lament and protestation of their families.

Everyone was afraid of being separated from family.

For the week, prior, I had a terrible cough. My mother bundled me up, certain that I would catch pneumonia. As we marched through the street toward the prison wagons, a big British Lieutenant came over to the crowd and followed us, staring at me all the while. He had a big hunting knife, hanging from his belt, with Indian feathers around the handle. Abruptly, he pulled me out of the crowd, separating me from my parents. I screamed for my Papa. My father struggled with the Lieutenant, but my father was not a warrior, and the soldier struck him down, bloodying his forehead.

“Here lassie, “ said the Lieutenant, “I want to examine your papers”, he lied, as he leaned down in my face. He had yellow teeth, and sour breath. I began to struggle violently, when I saw where he was taking me. The redcoat dragged me into a nearby alley. When we were out of sight of the rest of the crowd, he lifted me up and threw me to the ground, sat on me, and then lifted my dress and petticoats, and began to tear off my undergarments. Enraged, I scratched under his left eye, drawing blood.

“I like a woman with spirit” he said.

“Then he struck me squarely in the face, breaking my nose. I lost consciousness. When I regained consciousness, I knew that I was bleeding because I saw my blood on my garments. While he was ravaging me, I felt him jerking, and jerking with hip thrusts. Just as he was reaching his rapture, leaning his face heavenward, I noticed the huge Indian hunting knife had fallen from his belt. I grabbed the knife with both hands. With every remaining ounce of strength in my body, I plunged the knife deep into his belly, again and again.”

I must have hit an artery, because the blood began streaming out through his bodice. He got very quiet as he stared down at the knife in his belly, then fell over on me.”

At this point, Paul began to cry; lacking sleep, and overcome with fear, and the horror of the brutal experience visited upon the young French girl, now the specter.

The specter, sensing that this would be the best time get this innocent eleven year old to help her to be released from the earth-bound prison, repeated her incantation,

“ I have been laying in this cold grave, waiting for an innocent man who is untainted by greed, lust, or dangerous and evil thoughts. Are you such a man?”

Paul, now overcome with fear, cried out

“Yes specter, do what you want with me!”

With this permission, the spirit rose-up and entered Paul’s body, piercing his heart Slowly Paul watched as the specter reconstituted into a beautiful young girl again. But the shock, and the dreadful, icy cold pain in his heart caused Paul to pass out. He fell into a deep sleep.

When the first glimmer of daylight, spread across the sky above the place where we slept, the three of us awoke.

“That was the best sleep I have had in a long time,” John said as he stretched and yawned.

Still a little chilled, I began to do jumping jacks, to warm up my body temperature. Noticing that Paul looked a little pale, I helped him up and hugged him and rubbed his body to warm him up. He was quiet, and said nothing.

As the dawn broke over the forest, John pointed out a path leading from the gated cemetery, “Maybe we can follow that path to find a road?” So we left the Green Lady Cemetery and followed the path, which sure enough, led to a dirt road through the forest. Thirty minutes later we met a station wagon driven by a Park Ranger, who was as glad to see us, as we were to see him. When we told him that we had spent the night in a cemetery, he said,

“I don’t know of any cemetery within a radius of two miles. Leastwise not one that you could get to by car.”

John and I looked at each other, puzzled, but said nothing.

We braced ourselves for Dad’s tirade as we drove into the campsite where we spotted Dad’s Volkswagon van. But our parents were just glad that we had been found safe and sound. Mom cried and hugged us all. Dad just shook his head.

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Epilogue:

This strange story within a story was probably a lot to process for an innocent boy of eleven years of age. So, Paul didn’t tell us his side of the story until the day before his wedding in 1999. It was the night of the Rehearsal Dinner. He and Anne Michelle were about to be married on the grounds of the Wye Estate, in a colonial building on the British land grant, of 10,000 acres overlooking the Chesapeake Bay. By this time

Paul was 46, and had had much time to think about the experience in the Green Lady Cemetery at Acadia National Park. I suppose, that the occasion, and the moderate amount of alcohol, loosened Paul's tongue.

We were all roasting the Bride and Groom—telling what we believed to be the best of each family's stories. To this day, I still don't know why I told the story of the Green Lady Cemetery. Neither John, nor I had ever brought up the tale of the night that we slept in the cemetery, not in the thirty-five years since all of us boys had been lost in the forest, while gathering firewood in Acadia National Park.

Paul listened to me recount the night when we wandered from the campground into the Green Lady Cemetery, and then spoke up about his dream with the French girl's specter that night. Truly, none of us had ever heard his version.

It was a good story.

The End

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