WILD & WONDERFUL (AND PARANORMAL) WEST VIRGINIA

BY DENVER MICHAELS
Other Titles by Denver Michaels

*People are Seeing Something: A Survey of Lake Monsters in the United States and Canada*

*Water Monsters South of the Border*
The Enigmatic Mound Builders

The strangeness centered in present-day West Virginia predates our historical records. Coincidentally, long ago, an enigmatic people inhabited the area—the Mound Builders. To say that we know little about the Mound Builders is an understatement. If not for their burial mounds, we would probably know nothing of their existence at all. But they left behind traces of their mysterious culture in the form of burial mounds—many, many burial mounds—West Virginia alone has over 400 mounds that we know of.

The vast majority of the mounds in West Virginia are thought to be from the Early Woodland period which lasted from roughly 1000 BCE–200 CE. Most of the mounds are believed to belong to the Adena culture—a culture comprised of various independent Eastern Woodlands tribes that were linked by funerary customs and their use of burial mounds.²

Figure 1: A sign off of Route 19 outside of Clarksburg. Photo taken by author.
Based on artifacts found in burial mounds, the tribes making up the Adena culture had an extensive trade network. Shells from the Gulf of Mexico, mica from North Carolina, and copper from the Great Lakes have been found inside of burial mounds. The Mound Builders were excellent coppersmiths; armor, jewelry, and weaponry of fine workmanship have been recovered.

It seems that the Mound Builders reserved elaborate burial methods for elite members of society—presumably royalty, renowned warriors, and shamans. Ordinary folks were cremated and their charred remains were buried in small, elongated tombs.3
The analysis of skeletal remains from Mound Builder sites reveal that the Mound Builders had broad faces. It is believed that they engaged in the ancient practice of cradle boarding. Cradle boarding is a technique that was used by ancient people to flatten and reshape the head by binding the head of an infant to a board.\textsuperscript{4}

The largest burial mound in West Virginia is the Grave Creek Mound in Moundsville, just south of Wheeling. The mound, at 69 feet tall and 295 feet in diameter, is one of the largest conical-type burial mounds in the United States.

When the Grave Creek Mound was opened in 1838, several skeletons were found. Each skeleton was surrounded by beads; one was covered with thin strips of mica. A stone tablet was allegedly found as well; it was said to have been engraved with characters resembling hieroglyphs.\textsuperscript{5}
An article written in the *Charleston Daily Mail* on October 22, 1922 had this to say about the Grave Creek Mound:

Archaeologists investigating the mound some years ago dug out a skeleton said to be that of a female because of the formation of the bones. **The skeleton was seven feet four inches tall and the jawbone would easily fit over the face of a man weighing 160 pounds.** That the women of that ancient day were not unlike the women of today in their liking for finery was evidenced by the articles that were found beside the skeleton of what centuries ago was a “flapper.” Seventeen hundred ivory beads, 500 seashells of an involute species and five copper bracelets were found in the vault. The beads and shells were about the neck and breast of the skeleton while the bracelets were about the arms (emphasis added).

Not far from the Grave Creek Mound, laborers on a road by the Ohio River uncovered a skeleton “of a very large person” thought to be the remains of a Mound Builder.6

The second largest mound in West Virginia is located in South Charleston. This mound is 175 feet in diameter and 35 feet tall. In 1883, scientists from the Smithsonian Institute excavated the mound. A large skeleton was found inside of a vault in the center of the mound. The skeleton had several other skeletons laid out around it in a radial pattern. The central skeleton was over 7 feet in length.7
The 7-foot skeleton from the Charleston mound is certainly impressive in size. This is not a fluke or an outlier—skeletons well over 8 feet tall have been found in burial mounds throughout the Kanawha Valley. It is interesting to note that there were many mounds in the Charleston area. From Charleston to Institute, there once stood a series of mounds that replicated a celestial alignment. “As above, so below” was a common theme among ancient builders.

Colossal skeletons have also been discovered along the Cheat River. In 1774, Jack Parsons was walking along the river, which had recently flooded, and he noticed some bones protruding from the ground. He pulled a femur from the soil; when he compared it to his own, it was seven inches longer. He removed the remaining bones and laid them out—the person would have stood at a height of 8 feet when alive! Moreover, the jawbone fit completely over Parsons’ face.

Similarly, in Hardy County, a jaw bone was discovered that belonged to a giant. The lower jaw, with 16 perfectly preserved teeth, easily fit over top of a person’s face.

Large skeletal finds have prompted many to believe than an ancient race of giants inhabited North America centuries ago. In 1930, Professor Ernest Sutton of Salem College excavated two mounds in

Figure 5: Criel Mound in South Charleston. Photo taken by author.
Doddridge County. Sutton uncovered four skeletons during the excavation. The smallest was 7 feet in length; the largest—9 feet! The best specimen measured 7'6. Professor Sutton believed the remains belonged to a group he referred to as the Siouan Indians.  

Across the river, in Ohio, large skeletons have also been found. The Ohio Science Annual reported in their 1898 issue that a skeleton measuring 8’7 was recovered in Morgan County. 

Martin’s Ferry, just across the river from Wheeling, was the site of a mound that was demolished in 1893. The Wheeling Daily Intelligencer reported on April 6, 1893, that a skull was recovered in the mound that was at least twice the size of a normal human skull. According to the paper, the massive skull was put on display in the window of the post office news stand. 

Another Ohio giant was found in the early 1900s. A skeleton was found measuring 8 feet long from the head to the ankles; the feet were missing. The skull was so enormous that it would fit over a regular-sized person’s head like a helmet. 

Well to the northeast, in Sayre, Pennsylvania, 68 skeletons were uncovered during the excavation of a mound. The average length of the skeletons was 7 feet; many were much larger. Huge axes were found beside many of the bones. 

Massive weapons have also been recovered in present-day West Virginia. Judge Hosmer wrote, in Origin of Our Antiquities, that a steel bow was recovered in 1820 near the Ohio River. The bow was 10 feet in length. Obviously, it would have taken someone of enormous stature to wield such a weapon. Moreover, a steel bow raises questions—conventional wisdom states that steel was introduced to the New World after Columbus. Was ancient America more technologically advanced than we have been taught? 

There Were Giants on the Earth in Those Days 

An entire book could be written about massive skeletons found at Mound Builder sites. Volumes could be written about giants in North America. When you consider this, along with native folktales of giants—and, ancient religious texts which refer to giants—there seems to be little doubt that giants once walked the earth. 

For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? Nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.
And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

In the preceding verses, it is clear that we are dealing with extraordinarily large beings. Converting the ancient Hebrew measurements into United States customary units, Goliath was close to 10 feet tall. King Og’s bed was 13.5 feet long and 6 feet wide. I hate to state the obvious, but that is one big bed!

There texts other than the Bible that also mention the existence of giants. The Popol Vuh, the sacred text of the K’iche’ Maya, who inhabited the western highlands of Guatemala, speaks of a time when giants inhabited the earth. The same can be said for ancient Mesopotamian writings.

Early European explorers encountered giants in the Patagonian region of South America and on Easter Island. These encounters have been recorded in their writings. In North America, the explorers Hernando de Soto and John Smith both met giants when they arrived in the New World.

The idea of a race of giants inhabiting North America has been scoffed at and dismissed by scholars. To merely mention the topic subjects one to ridicule. But why? Many writings from the Smithsonian itself corroborates large skeletal finds!

Today, the Smithsonian, responsible for many mound excavations over a century ago, claims to have no giant skeletons in its possession. No evidence—case closed.

Not so fast…

I’m not convinced it is that simple. I cannot ignore all of the myths, legends, religious writings, and hundreds of reports of giant skeletons just because the Smithsonian swears they do not have the remains in their possession. Furthermore, I won’t be deterred by ridicule or insults—throwing the label “pseudoscience” at the issue does not make it go away. A long history and rich tradition of giants cannot be erased simply because it is inconvenient.

An Elite Bloodline

I firmly believe a millennium ago, a race of giants inhabited North America—in my mind, there is no doubt. These giants, I believe, may not have been the Mound Builders, but lived among them—they
represented an elite class that ruled the land. The intimidating size of these people would certainly make them seem kingly. The women of the giant stock were tall and robust as well; moreover, the giantesses were renowned for their beauty.

It seems that those of the royal class had better genes than their subjects; they even had longer life expectancies—much longer. In Vine Deloria’s book *Red Earth, White Lies*, he wrote of Native American elders who claimed that people long ago lived to ages exceeding 200 years. Interestingly, religious texts such as the Bible speak of a time when humans lived much longer than today. The biblical patriarchs lived about 900 years. After the Great Flood, a global catastrophe in which only Noah and his family were spared, lifespans dropped off sharply. Noah lived to an age of 950; his son Shem, however, died when he was 600 years of age. Shem’s grandson, Salah, lived to be 433. Salah’s grandson, Peleg, died at an age of 239. Five generations later, Abraham, the father of three world religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—“only” lived to be 175. Today, in the United States, a person 80 years of age has surpassed the average life expectancy by a couple of years.

The book of Genesis is not the only place to find tales of extraordinary longevity; Hindu legends speak of people who have lived for centuries. The ancient Greeks told of people who lived 300 years; the Romans did as well. In ancient Sumer, the kings supposedly lived thousands of years. The Sumerian King List recounts the rule of various early kings—three of the kings were each said to rule 72,000 years! Of course, this sounds unbelievable, but there has to be a grain of truth to the Sumerian legend. The truth—people once lived much longer than they do today! Why?

When thinking back to the giants who ruled North America in remote antiquity—the genetically superior elite class—we are presented with a problem. They do not fit into the traditional Darwinian evolutionary paradigm that we have been taught. In fact, they demonstrate that a process of **devolution** has taken place. Why?

**Evil Giants**

According to many ancient texts and legends, the giants that roamed the Earth were evil, bloodthirsty tyrants.

4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare
children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.
5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.
7 And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.
—Genesis 6:4-7 (King James Version)

According to the biblical account, the giants in those days were so wicked—and, mankind was also evil and had been corrupted—that God decided to cleanse the entire planet with a global flood.

In my book Water Monsters South of the Border, I touched on the Inca legends surrounding Lake Titicaca and the creative acts of the god Viracocha:

According to legend, after a cataclysmic flood had overcome the earth, the world was covered in darkness. Against this backdrop, Viracocha came forth from Lake Titicaca’s waters and created dry land. He also commanded the sun and the moon to rise. After Viracocha’s first creative acts—which, in my mind, are eerily similar to the biblical account—he created people. Unlike the Biblical tale of God creating the first man from the dust of the earth, Viracocha created people from large stones. These people were a race of giants who greatly displeased their creator. Viracocha remedied the situation; he wiped the giants from the face of the earth with a mighty flood. Again, the biblical parallels are staggering. The creator god made people once again; this time, though, he used smaller stones and was pleased with his creation—at least for a time.

Wherever we find giant myths and legends, we find that they are a scourge to mankind. They are evil; they eat human flesh; they engage in perverse sexual activities; they devour the food of the people and are destructive—people are burdened by their very presence.

The giants of ancient North America are a mixed bag; there are traditions of both good and bad giants. Many have heard tales of the Si-Te-Cah, the red-headed cannibalistic giants of western Nevada that harassed the Paiutes until the Paiutes finally vanquished them. Likewise, giant cannibals known as the Stone Giants continually raided Iroquois villages until being driven out. I find this excerpt from Ross
Hamilton’s book *A Tradition of Giants: The Elite Social Hierarchy of American Prehistory* to be very interesting:

> From the outset of common memory, native people divided the Tall Ones into two basic groups, the good and the bad. In the beginning, both were cannibalistic, but the good giants later stopped this practice and began to live among regular humans. It was from their ancient mating practices that the later human giants found in the mounds were believed to have descended. 14

Hamilton neatly sums up, in that paragraph, the phenomenon of the giant skeletons found in the mounds of West Virginia and beyond. As the Bible, other religious texts, and various ancient literature proclaims—**there were giants on the earth in those days.** Some of those giants left a bloodline that would become the upper echelon of Ancient American society.

**The Legacy of the Giants**

What do giants have to do with the concentration of paranormal activity in West Virginia? Maybe nothing. I can’t help but wonder though, if the spirits of some of the victims of the evil giants—the cannibals—who would have died horrible, unimaginable deaths, may have “stayed behind.” Maybe the energy from some of those tormented souls manifests itself as strange phenomena today. Paranormal researchers consistently find that locations known for high levels of paranormal activity are often the site of violent and traumatic events. Certainly, being eaten by a giant fits this profile.

There is another theory worthy of consideration, a theory rooted in evangelical Christian theology (though maybe not widely accepted): the spirits of the deceased giants are wandering the earth today. According to this line of thought, giants originated as the offspring of fallen angels and human women.

4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.
—Genesis 6:4 (King James Version)

This, of course, was not part of God’s plan. The giants, evil and corrupt, only alive due to a catastrophic deviation from God’s plan, were not redeemable. As such, when they died, their spirits had nowhere to go—they roamed the earth, disembodied, and became
what we know as demons. Demons, it is said, can manifest themselves in almost any form—could demons be behind cryptid reports, alien encounters, and other strange phenomena? I don’t necessarily subscribe to this theory, but it is worth considering.

I also wonder if the disturbance of burial mounds might have something to do with paranormal activity. Consider the legend of Passaconeway.

Passaconeway, of the Pennacook tribe in New England, who lived during the 1600s, was known as a great peacemaker. He was also a giant, standing at 7 feet tall. This friendly giant was rumored to live to an age of 120 years. Furthermore, legend holds that he had what could only be described as supernatural powers. Among his incredible talents was an ability to control the weather—he could summon storms.

In their book *Giants on Record: America’s Hidden History, Secrets in the Mounds and the Smithsonian Files*, Jim Vieira and Hugh Newman mention a British tradition of giants who had control over the elements. What grabbed my attention about the legends are rumors of great storms forming when the graves of giants are disturbed.

I wonder: if indeed giants, or at least a small subset of giants, were able to control the weather and had other “magical” powers—to the point of creating storms when their graves are disturbed—how does this bode for West Virginia, a land with hundreds of mounds, most of which have been completely obliterated? Could areas of West Virginia prone to strangeness be under the influence of the angry spirits of giants? Could the once mighty beings be lashing out from the beyond the grave at the disturbance of their resting places? If not the spirits of the giants, could at least their energy still be present in some form?

Aside from the West Virginia giants, it is obvious that the funerary rites of the mound-building cultures held very deep significance. The fact that so many mounds are in West Virginia, most of which have been disturbed, if not demolished all together, leads me to believe that this could be a basis for much of the oddities that occur in the Mountain State.

There might be another group of ancient people that in some way contribute to unusual activity in West Virginia—the moon-eyed people.
The Azgen

Much of present-day West Virginia was void of permanent Native American settlements when European colonists began their westward push. Why? The area is rich in game and other resources; why not live there?

In 1773, at the behest of Virginia Governor Lord Dunmore, Thomas Bullit travelled to present-day southwestern Ohio to seek permission from the Shawnee to establish settlements in the Can-tuc-kee lands (which included large portions of modern-day West Virginia). Shawnee chief Black Fish was unable to grant permission; he did not feel it was his to give, the land belonged to the ghosts of the Azgen, a tribe of “moon-eyed” people who were murdered by the ancestors of the Shawnee. Because of the ghosts, the Shawnee refused to settle on the land and only used it—respectfully—as hunting grounds.

Who were these moon-eyed people? According to many legends, they were a light-skinned, nocturnal people with large eyes. They had a sensitivity to light and could only see in the dark.

The Cherokee also have legends of moon-eyed people. According to Cherokee legends, the moon-eyes were nocturnal and lived in circular earthen houses. Long ago, as the Cherokee made their southward migration, they encountered the large-eyed white people and waged war against them. Like the Shawnee, the Cherokee also rid the land of these peculiar people.

There is another tradition in which the Creek tribe annihilated a group of moon-eyed people. According to this legend, the strange people could not see during certain moon phases. The Creek used this to their advantage and attacked the moon-eyes when they were vulnerable.

Who were, or, what were, the moon-eyed people? Some say they were albinos; some claim they were Europeans—possibly descended from Madoc, the Welsh Prince; author Barbara Alice Mann, of Seneca descent, has written that the moon-eyed people were mound-building astronomers who merged with the Cherokee. There is really no way to know, and for the purposes of this book, speculation is useless. What we do know, is that a group of people strange to the Native Americans were in present-day West Virginia long ago; they were eventually annihilated. The question then becomes, could the ghosts of the Azgen—the moon-eyed people—play a role in the paranormal in West
Virginia? I think the answer has to be yes; with that being said, I think other factors are also at work.
A Bloody History & an Enduring Curse

I know that am not alone in thinking that extreme violence seems to leave its signature on the land for generations. How many ghost stories exist that are set in battlefields or places that have experienced intense brutality?

West Virginia has certainly seen its share of bloodshed. During the War Between the States, extensive guerilla warfare raged between Confederate sympathizers and Union loyalists. There were many battles as well; some were decisive to the overall war effort. The town of Harpers Ferry, sitting at the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers, bordering both Maryland and Virginia, was hotly contested during the war. The strategic location, along with its access to rail, made control of the town vital for both armies; the town changed hands eight times during the conflict.

Blood was spilled in Harpers Ferry before the war as well. On October 16, 1859, staunch abolitionist John Brown led a raid on the Federal arsenal housed in Harpers Ferry. Brown believed that the raid would trigger a slave revolt—the revolt would then be armed with the weaponry confiscated during the raid. Brown’s raiding party consisted
of 21 men; included in the party were five black men and three of Brown’s sons.\textsuperscript{15}

Brown and his raiders captured the armory; ultimately, though, the raid was a failure. Brown believed that once the raid began, local slaves would rally to help. This was a miscalculation—few showed up to support Brown’s efforts. Townspeople and local militiamen surrounded the armory while another group of militiamen captured the bridge over the Potomac—Brown’s fate was sealed; escape was cut off and he had no reinforcements coming. Brown and his men, accompanied by hostages captured during the raid, relocated to a small engine house—this would become known as “John Brown’s Fort.” On October 18, Robert E. Lee ended the siege when he sent a detachment of marines to storm the engine house.

The first casualty of the raid was Heyward Shepherd, a freed black man working for the railroad as a baggage handler. Shepherd was shot after he intervened when Brown’s men seized a passing Baltimore & Ohio train. Other casualties included Fontaine Beckham, the town’s mayor, and several other townsfolk. The marines who stormed the fort suffered two casualties, while ten raiders were killed—including two of Brown’s sons.
John Brown was captured and tried for treason. He was hanged on December 2, 1859 in nearby Charles Town. The man who would later assassinate President Abraham Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth, was in attendance and watched Brown hang. Two weeks later, four other men who participated in the raid were executed. On March 16, 1860, two more of Brown’s men suffered the same fate. Several members of the raiding party escaped and were never found including Brown’s son Owen.

Today, Harpers Ferry is regarded by many as one of the most haunted places in West Virginia. This is saying a lot; West Virginia has a lot of haunted places! Ghosts roam the streets and haunt houses and various buildings. The hillsides of the Eastern Panhandle, along with neighboring Maryland and Virginia, are stalked by the Snarly Yow—a “hell hound” or phantom dog. The Snarly Yow will be discussed later.

Today, Hog Alley, a small alley connecting Potomac Street and High Street is haunted by one of Brown’s raiders. Some people who have walked past hog Alley at night have reported seeing a tall black man with blue eyes dressing in 19th century clothing peering through the darkness.16

The ghost who haunts the alley is Dangerfield Newby. The character Django, in the movie Django Unchained, is very loosely based on Dangerfield Newby. Newby was born a slave in Virginia around 1815, but was later freed by his father—a white man named Henry Newby.

A letter found on Newby’s body probably explains his rationale for joining John Brown’s raid. The letter is from his wife Harriet who was still enslaved waiting for Newby to acquire enough money to purchase her freedom:

Dear Husband,

your kind letter came duly to hand and it gave me much pleasure to here from you and especely to hear you are better of your rhumatism and hope when I here from you again you may be entirely well. I want you to buy me as soon as possible for if you do not get me somebody else will the servents are very disagreeable they do all they can to set my mistress againt me Dear Husband you not the trouble I see the last two years has ben like a trouble dream to me it is said Master is in want of monney if so I know not what time he may sell me an then all my bright hops of the futer are blasted for there has ben one bright hope to cheer me in all my
troubles that is to be with you for if I thought I shoul never see you this 
earth would have no charms for me do all you Can for me witch I have no doubt you will I want to see you so much the Chriildren are all well the baby cannot walk yet all it can step around enny thing by holding on it is very much like Agnes I mus bring my letter to Close as I have no newes to write you mus write soon and say when you think you Can Come.

Your affectionate Wife,
Harriet Newby.\textsuperscript{17}

Dangerfield Newby was the first of Brown’s men to be killed. He suffered inhumane treatment; he was shot in the neck, stabbed repeatedly, his limbs were cut off, and his corpse was left in an alley where pigs feasted on his flesh.\textsuperscript{18} It said that his ears were even cut off and taken as souvenirs.

Figure 8: Hog Alley. Photograph taken by author.

Hog Alley is only one of Harpers Ferry’s haunted locations. St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church, sitting prominently on a hill with the Appalachian Trail running along its side, is the first stop on a local ghost
An eerie reverend has been spotted praying in the church late at night.¹⁹

Figure 9: St. Peter’s Church. Photograph taken by author.

The old Ironhorse Inn is supposedly haunted by the ghost of a Confederate soldier who was shot and tumbled down the stairs; the Wager house is credited by many of being the most haunted spot in all of Harpers Ferry.²⁰ These are but a few examples.

If you are ever in the area, visit Harpers Ferry (Harpers Ferry is roughly an hour and a half drive from Washington, D.C.). If you are brave, treat yourself to a ghost tour after dark!

A Bloody Borderland

West Virginia has a bloody history that dates back to a time well before the United States became a nation. In colonial times, the Ohio Valley was a violent frontier. Bloody skirmishes between European settlers and Native Americans seeking to halt their western expansion were commonplace.
The hostilities between the natives and the settlers reached their crescendo in the 1770s. Determined to put an end to the native resistance, Virginia Governor Lord Dunmore sent the Virginia Militia to wage war against the Mingo and Shawnee people. Thus began Dunmore’s War.

Enter Chief Cornstalk.

Cornstalk was a Shawnee leader who lived in present-day southeastern Ohio. He was thought to have been born around 1720 in modern-day Pennsylvania. Cornstalk was hostile toward British expansionism. He was a participant in the French and Indian War and led raids into Virginia during Pontiac’s War.21

Cornstalk fought against the Crown’s interests again during Dunmore’s War. However, Cornstalk, his tribesmen, and their allies were defeated by the Virginia Militia at the Battle of Point Pleasant—one of the bloodiest encounters between colonists and the natives.22 Cornstalk played a pivotal role in the negotiation of the Treaty of Camp Charlotte.23 However, with the onset of the American Revolution, peace would be short-lived.

As the Revolutionary War ramped up, many tribes began to ally themselves with the Crown. Fearing that the Shawnee may follow suit, American forces summoned Cornstalk to Fort Randolph in Point Pleasant.

Upon Cornstalk’s arrival at the fort, he and his companion Red Hawk were taken into custody. When Cornstalk did not return to his village, his son Elinipsico went to the fort looking for him. Unfortunately, Elinipsico’s arrival at the fort occurred only a day before two soldiers were attacked by natives while deer hunting. One of the men died during the attack. Soldiers at the fort were enraged and believed Elinipsico led the attackers to the fort.24 Vengeance was demanded.

Cornstalk, Elinipsico, and Red Hawk were killed on November 10, 1777.
Virginia governor Patrick Henry was furious over the murders and demanded that the killers face justice. In some accounts of the story, the murderers were acquitted; in other versions, a trial never took place.

It has been claimed that before his death, Cornstalk set a curse in motion:

“I was a friend to the bordermen. Many a time I saved him and his people from harm. I came to your house as a friend, and you murdered me. For this may the curse of the Great Spirit rest upon this spot. May its people be paralyzed by the stain of my blood.”

The curse is probably fictional—it is unlikely that a murderous, angry mob would have recorded his final words in such detail. It has also been said that the curse was never uttered by Cornstalk, but by actors.
at Point Pleasant’s riverside amphitheater. Whether or not the curse is true or a fictional account, it is a great story. According to some versions, the curse was to last for a century; other accounts set the length of the curse at 200 years. 200 years coincides with the collapse of the Silver Bridge. The suspension bridge collapsed and fell into the icy waters of the Ohio River on December 15, 1967; 46 people lost their lives. Some believe that this tragic event concluded Cornstalk’s curse.

Aside from the bridge collapse, Point Pleasant has had an incredible amount of misfortune. Tragic floods, fires, and economic woes have long plagued the residents. 26

To add another wrinkle to the story of bloodshed and curses—and their supernatural effects—consider this: Cornstalk’s bones have been exhumed and relocated at least four times! 27 If supernatural events do take place, moving a murdered chief’s bones around cannot be a good thing. In the same vein, with over 400 ancient burial mounds in the state—elaborate, and most definitely sacred—most having been disturbed, entered, emptied, and destroyed altogether—this cannot be a good thing either.

Some Personal Thoughts
In my opinion, West Virginia’s bloody history has got to have something to do with the overabundance of paranormal activity in the state. I am not an expert in this field (or any field for that matter!), but it seems that an area with such a concentration of battles, ongoing conflicts, and ancient burial grounds is bound to experience some sort of residual supernatural effects.

An old friend of mine used to tell me stories of weird things and strange happenings in and around several Virginia Civil War battlefields. He and his father were avid hunters of artifacts from the war. They had quite an impressive collection—revolvers, swords, spurs, belt buckles, bayonets, and buckets of spent musket balls. In their zeal for finding artifacts, the pair engaged in unethical, and at times, illegal activity. Under the cover of darkness, equipped with shovels and a metal detector, the outlaws would sneak into the woods around certain battlefields and hunt for their treasures.

I was told of a place that they frequented—presumably on private property bordering a battlefield—that was extremely haunted. One of our mutual friends accompanied them one night and something happened. They never told me what exactly occurred, but whatever it was disturbed them deeply. The mutual friend said that he would never
even drive down the road leading to the place again unless he was armed, and he would never go anywhere close at night. I tried and tried to get the complete story out of them, but I never did. Eventually I dropped it, but I know something—something supernatural—scared the three artifact hunters badly enough to never go back to their favorite spot.

In the same way, I’m sure the violent frontier along the Ohio River and various spots where skirmishes took place during the Civil War are also patrolled by “leftover” entities. When you couple that with countless burial mounds that have been disturbed, and the possibility that giants once walked the land and legends of an ancient “moon-eyed” people, you have a definite source for the paranormal. Perhaps it manifests itself not only as ghosts, but also in the form of strange creatures—creatures such as Mothman. Who knows, maybe it even has something to do with UFO activity.
Haunted Locations

West Virginia has many haunted locations with unique back stories. There are even towns, or at least sections of towns, that are said to be haunted. I mentioned Harpers Ferry earlier, but there are others. Shepherdstown is well-known for paranormal activity and is thought of by many as the most haunted town in America. Parkersburg, once the “wickedest city along the Ohio River,” is home to the haunted Blennerhassett Hotel; also, the ghosts of Confederate soldiers are said to haunt Quincy Hill.

In Lewisburg’s historical district, the Old Stone Church once served as a hospital during the Civil war. Today, the moans and cries of wounded soldiers can be heard at times. The General Lewis Inn is haunted by at least three spirits. Among them is Rueben, a slave who was hanged in the house in what is now the dining room. At times, a little girl can be heard laughing and crying. In room 208, the “lady is white” has been seen floating above the floor.

The Droop Mountain Battlefield in Pocahontas County was the site of the last large-scale battle on West Virginia soil. On November 6, 1863, the Confederacy lost the battle decisively thus ending their efforts to control West Virginia. Today, galloping horses can be heard and the apparitions of soldiers can be seen. A headless soldier wearing a Confederate uniform has been reported.

The West Virginia State Penitentiary in Moundsville, and the Whipple Company Store in Fayette County are a few other locations that come to mind. An entire book, maybe even series of books, could be written about the many haunted places throughout West Virginia. My favorites, though, are the Lake Shawnee Amusement Park and the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum.

The Lake Shawnee Amusement Park

Driving northeast a little less than an hour and a half from my birthplace in southwestern Virginia, you will come upon the Lake Shawnee Amusement Park. Located in Mercer County, and abandoned in 1966, this is not your average amusement park—this place has a dark history and may even sit on cursed land.

The park closed its doors in 1966 after the deaths of two young people. The park, built in the 1920s, had an unthinkable number of tragedies while in operation. A least six people died on the park’s rides; a young boy also drowned in the swimming pool.
The bloody history of the land dates back much further. The park was built on top of a mass grave—a Native American burial ground. You read that correctly; an amusement park was actually built on top of a Native American burial ground. What could go wrong? Additionally, several murders also took place on the property. Mitchell Clay and his family, among the earliest white people to move into the area, settled on the land in 1783 setting a violent confrontation in motion. While Clay was out hunting, a band of Shawnee killed his son and daughter. His eldest son was kidnapped and burned alive. Seeking revenge, Clay, with the help of other area settlers, killed several Shawnee in retaliation.

Today, people claim to see the swings in the park move on their own. A little girl wearing a bloody dress has also been seen. Featured on several television programs, Lake Shawnee Amusement Park is certainly one of the creepiest places in the country. Night tours are offered in October each year.

The Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum
Maybe my favorite haunted place is the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in Weston...

To read the rest: https://www.amazon.com/Wild-Wonderful-Paranormal-West-Virginia-ebook/dp/B06XCGVRHP/


23. Lizza, “Cornstalk.”


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.


About the Author

Denver Michaels is an author with a passion for cryptozoology, the paranormal, lost civilizations, and all things unexplained. At age 42, the Virginia native released his first book *People are Seeing Something*—a culmination of many years of research on the lake monster phenomenon. Since then, he has gone on to write *Water Monsters South of the Border* and this book, *Wild & Wonderful (and Paranormal) West Virginia*.

Michaels is employed as an engineering technologist and works full-time. He is married with three children. In his spare time, he continues to perform research and writing for future works.
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