

# SUPERNATURAL AND SPECTACULAR

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The Exorcist

▶ OCTOBER 15, 2013

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(pg. 12)

# The Legend Lives On

**LEGEND HAS IT** that long ago, when the northern woods of Wisconsin was beaver-trapper and fur-trader country, a supernatural history of sorts began to take shape. Ghost stories, passed down for generations, point to strange occurrences and inexplicable happenings deep in the woods and on the banks of the lakes and rivers. Old-timers recall tales told by their granddaddies — and in some cases, from personal experiences — of apparitions and phantom ceremonies throughout the territory. And then there are the modern-day locals who still see paranormal activities and ghostly re-enactments from a bygone era. Perhaps the frequency of these events is greater when compared to the rest of the country because Northern Wisconsin, even in 2013, is virtually the spitting image of Northern Wisconsin in 1885, so the landscape is the same ghostly landscape from yesteryear. Or maybe it's because there really is something otherworldly going on up there.

To understand these ghost stories is to understand the rough-and-tumble folks who have called this slice of America “home” over the last two centuries. Throughout the 1800s, pioneers and loggers heading west for opportunity and money — and some for glory — realized the natural beauty and economic potential of the land along the lakes and rivers. Present-day Hayward, Wis. — known more for the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame and Museum and its four-and-a-half-stories-tall and half-a-city-block-long giant muskie than for any individual accomplishment — is not too dissimilar in shape and form from when loggers began harvesting the giant, old-growth white pines in the 1880s. In fact, most of the frame houses in upper-Midwestern cities like Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Chicago were built with Northern Wisconsin lumber as part of FDR's Civilian Conservation Corps work-relief program camps in the 1930s and '40s. But that would come later.



**FISH STORY:** This photo proves that talk of the large muskie at the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame and Museum is no tall tale. Can the same be said of the region's ghost stories?

Legend has it that in the 1880s, two loggers were imbibing some of the local spirits in town and having a good ol' rowdydow with some of the other loggers. Later that night, they were walking past a creek that was denoted as Creek X on a surveyor map when something happened. A fog abruptly rolled in over the creek, and then a mist appeared. Both loggers were seeing the same thing, so they knew it wasn't a case of the alcohol getting on top of them. Something emerged from the mist; both loggers swore they saw a ghost.

From that time forward, the lake that Creek X flowed into came to be known as Ghost Lake. Similarly, the creek where this all allegedly occurred became known as Ghost Creek. “If you look at a modern-day map, Ghost Lake sort of does resemble a ghost,” says Emmett Brown, executive director of the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame and Museum in Hayward.

Emmett spent summers as a kid working at the nearby Ghost Lake Lodge. He recalls guests — and, from time to time, lodge owners Fred and Pearl Scheer and their son, Richard — speaking of ghost sightings of the two loggers rising from a foggy mist over the lake. “I never saw them, though,” laments Emmett.

These days, Ghost Lake Lodge is owned and operated by Nathan Knoche. Nathan says the pristine wilderness around the lodge and around all

For more information on the **Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame and Museum**, please visit [www.freshwater-fishing.org](http://www.freshwater-fishing.org)  
For more information on **Ghost Lake Lodge**, please visit [www.ghostlakelodge.com](http://www.ghostlakelodge.com)

11 cabins is of the same flora and fauna from the logging days in the 1880s. Generations of guests — including notable visitors like Ernest Hemingway, Ted Williams and Percy Faith — have come and gone, but the strange happenings continue to this day. People have reported seeing Chippewa Indians in full regalia chanting and dancing around a fire. When the people approached the Chippewa, they — along with the fire — disappeared, leaving behind only a pile of cold ash.

Other visitors have reported seeing lights going on and off in cabins that were vacant. Several people swear they've seen glowing orbs, and a former housekeeper recalls cleaning a cabin when a clock radio — unplugged and with no batteries — came on, assumedly playing a Percy Faith song.

Yarns like these are interesting all year long, but this time of year, they are significantly more enjoyable. As the world readies itself for Halloween — celebrated differently along each compass point — one thing the world citizenry can agree on is that from now through the end of the month, we celebrate stories of the paranormal and tell them to our friends, our colleagues, our family members and maybe — just maybe — to the person sitting on the plane next to you. Be sure to see our cover story on Halloween activities on page 48, and relive that haunting feeling you got when you saw *The Exorcist* for the first time while reading about Georgetown on page 36.

Back in Hayward, Emmett Brown and Nathan Knoche are going about their respective business. Emmett preserves the 100,000-plus fresh-water-fishing artifacts on display at the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame and Museum, while Nathan is shuttering the Ghost Lake Lodge until spring. As Halloween approaches, Northern Wisconsin continues to be cloaked in a misty shroud of suspicion and suspense while the four-story-tall muskie stands sentry. Emmett makes sure of that. “For every ghost story,” he says, “there's probably 10 fish stories.”

  
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