

Middle Bridge Ghost

p.1

The Middle Bridge Road Ghost  
Middle Bridge Road  
Bowling Green, Kentucky  
by: Jeffrey Allen Barefoot

FA 78

## Introduction

This paper is a supplement to the video. The purpose of this evaluation of the Middle Bridge Road Ghost is not to validate the existence of the ghost, but rather to analyze the story of the legend. My interest lies in how and why the story is conveyed today and any possible changes in the story throughout time. The video that accompanies this report should be viewed prior to reading this paper. Please notice how the people react to the questions and note their body language. Notice also, their tone of voice and the answers they give to the questions. Some of the interviews are lengthy, however, I felt that editing their information would inaccurately explain their feelings and deny the viewers an essential understanding of the ghost. Some viewers may pick up on information from the interviews that I was not especially looking for, but it may be helpful in answering their own questions. Please view the video tape at this time.

## The Middle Bridge Road Ghost

Local legends and lore spark interest in people, especially stories concerning ghosts. An interesting aspect about local legends is that the people affected have nothing in common except sharing a common legend and perhaps, living in the same community. The local legend that I investigated was the legend of Middle Bridge Road. I was intrigued to investigate this particular legend because I heard about it when I moved here, six years ago. Two different times I was told about the ghost and both stories varied.

1. A girl went down to the bridge with her pet canary and she fell off the bridge and died. Supposedly, her canary still searches for her at night.

2. A girl was forced down to the bridge during which she was raped and murdered and her body was thrown over the side. Her ghost is said to walk throughout the area.

The Middle Bridge Road area is located in the country, near Alvaton.

One very disappointing aspect that I found while researching the Middle Bridge legend is that there is no documented evidence written about the area. After failing to find any documented information, I realized I was forced to do all my own research and that I had to take everyone's story into account.

The people I contacted are very nice, hard working people. I had only three people that declined to be interviewed. Those

that were interviewed, seemed to be what Carol W. Von Sydow would call passive bearers. They seemed to distance themselves from the story, which is evident during Mr. Thurman's interview. His expressions and tone of voice brought about a lot of disbelief in the legend.

The questions I chose were used to help elicit information from the people and to perhaps, refresh their memory about the legend.

#### Common Elements

I find it interesting that there are some common elements in the local legend that are closely related to most "ghost stories";

- a) The person (ghost) died a violent death.
- b) The bridge is located in a dark, isolated area.
- c) One person interviewed noticed a foul odor but did not connect it with the local legend.

Until this paper, I believe that the legend was "kept alive" by oral descriptions, usually told by young people. The legend has been told and survived for many generations. Bill Fitzpatrick said he had a "lawn full of students" which I estimated to be at least ten years ago. Mr. Thurman talked about a time when he drove over the bridge and some students had hung up a dummy. That had to be over twenty years ago because the bridge was washed out in 1969!

Middle Bridge Ghost

Much thanks goes to the youth, for they in some form or another keep the Middle Bridge Ghost story alive. Whether there is truth about the story is not as important as the fun that so many people have had telling the stories.

It seems that the story is very different among various generations. The older generation tends to deny anything about a ghost being near the area and even give reasons why there is not a ghost. One reason is that W.K.U. students use the legend and surrounding area for practical joke purposes.

When students do go to the bridge, they jestfully hope that a ghost or something supernatural will appear before them. The students are wanting past events to somewhat repeat themselves, and this could indirectly be a type of repetitive phenomenon, according to Pierce.

The younger generation uses a secluded, mysterious, wooded area and the legend for entertainment. I think entertainment could be another function of folklore that William R. Bascom could have included in his functions of folklore. It appears that the young people are keeping the legend alive simply for entertainment. They will tell the story and then go to the area late at night to scare one another.

Another function I have concluded from the interviews is education. I think the story is sometimes told to keep people from the bridge so they will not get hurt.

FAT8

Still, another function is integration. I think that the legend is used among a group to "bond" together. It gives the group something in common, even if it is in a non-serious sort of way, such as a group of students.

When I first heard of the legend it was told to me for entertainment purposes. When my friends and I went to the bridge to "investigate", I guess we were, in a sense, legend tripping. We went to the site of the legend to try to re-live it. We went at 12 midnight and it was extremely spooky. With the legend running wild in my head and the mysterious, dark, wooded atmosphere surrounding me, anything seemed to scare us as we silently walked with our small flashlights. Every sound was exaggerated as we quietly walked to the bridge. Needless to say, no ghost was seen but the moment will probably never be forgotten. Nothing supernatural happened that we could see, but it certainly was a scary and exciting time.

Characteristics

There are various characteristics of folklore that are found in the Middle Bridge Road legend. One being that the story is informally transmitted. The legend is transmitted orally among young people. Another characteristic of folklore that is found in the local legend is that it is anonymous. No one person has ever claimed the legend to be their own. People usually hear it from an individual who heard it from someone else.

FA78

Middle Bridge Ghost

In conclusion, I would like to summarize my findings:

1. The legend is orally transmitted with little or no documented information.
2. The legend is usually told among young people for entertainment.
3. The story has survived many generations.
4. It is a fact that the story, in some form, has survived at the least 20 years.
5. Some of the people interviewed answered quickly and negatively denying the ghost exists.
6. Most of those interviewed had some type of explanation as to why the story is being told.
7. Many people still tell the story and visit the area.
8. The elements in the Middle Bridge Road Legend are common to those in most ghost stories.
9. Some characteristics in folklore are also found in the Middle Bridge Road legend.

One thing that I happily found is that people continue to tell the story. Because of the mysterious area, I can easily understand why a legend was initially started. I feel that this legend will endure until Bowling Green expands and engulfs the atmosphere of the area that has provided local stories for decades. I sure hope that this will be a very slow process so many more people can continue to enjoy the "Middle Bridge Road Ghost".

FA78

Middle Bridge Ghost

p.8

Interviews

Mr. Tomas Culler [Thomas C.]

1924 Hunts Lane

Bowling Green, Ky

Mr. Bill Fitzpatrick

1335 Middlebridge Rd.

Bowling Green, Ky

Mr. William Harrington

501 University Blvd.

Bowling Green, Ky

Mr. Michael Tanaro

517 Country Wood

Bowling Green, Ky

Mr. Fred Thurman

1594 Middlebridge Rd.

Bowling Green, Ky

Dr. Winstead &

1892 Middlebridge Rd.

Ellane Winstead

Bowling Green, Ky

FA78