

Folklore in the Marshall Area

By Jessica Hedderman and Scott Kelley

What is folklore? The correct definition of folklore is the collection of beliefs, customs, and traditions that people pass on from generation to generation. Folklore includes fairy tales, legends, myths, dances, games, riddles, and superstitions.

Folklore has been around since the beginning of time. When people developed a writing system, they began to record folk stories. Most folklore is passed down from person to person.

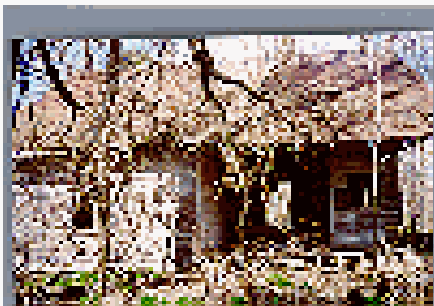
The origin of folklore began in ancient times; it was shared with all members of the society. Formerly, scholars believed the traditions were made up by uneducated peasants, called "folk," whose lives had not changed very much over the last hundred years. In the present day, scholars consider "folk" to be a group of people that share at least one common linking factor. This link may be geography, religion, or ethnic background.

For folklore to be considered authentic, it must have at least two versions. The folklore must also have existed in more than one time and place. For example, scholars have found more than 1,000 versions of the classic fairy tale "Cinderella." These versions come from many countries and have developed over hundreds of years.

There have been many local stories and tales that have been told over the years. One of the most talked about legends in Marshall is the Legend of Hatchet Man. Some people consider Hatchet Man to be the type of character that you would see in "Nightmare on Elm Street", while others find him to be one of a kind.

There have been many different stories told about Hatchet Man over the years. Some stories tell of his alleged murders. The most common one, outlined in "The Marshall Independent," states that he is a one-armed hatchet-wielding maniac, buried in a local cemetery that will seek revenge on those who trespass upon his grave at night. There have even been unconfirmed reports that he killed three Indiana State University students who were camping in the cemetery on a dare.

Another story, told by Linda Stephen, is that the man once lived in a house across from the cemetery and murdered his wife with the hatchet. While he is standing in the cemetery, when the moon is just right, he commits the murder again.



The cemetery in question is called Hatchet Man's, otherwise known as Macke Cemetery or the Bullskin Cemetery. The legend states that a one-armed man is buried in the cemetery, although there is a question as to whether the one-armed man is Hatchet Man or his victim.

Hatchet Man's Cemetery has become a popular hangout, perhaps because of its rural location and easy access. Most of the activity at the cemetery is harmless; it is a fun place to

have a good time and to get scared.

Some teenagers have tried to dig up the graves at Hatchet Man's, possibly looking for buried treasure or for the resting place of Hatchet Man himself. Their attempts failed, but people still go out there looking for some evidence of the story of Hatchet Man. Will you try to find the source of all the stories?

Other common links to folklore are those of the gypsies. Gypsies, or as they are better known, Roma, are located all over the world. They originated on the Indian continent over one thousand years ago. There were several great migrations that occurred in Romani history. The first was from from India; the second one, called Aresajipe, was from southwest Asia into Europe in the 14th century. The third great migration was from Europe to the Americas in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This migration occurred after Romani slavery was abolished in Europe from 1856-1864.

Dark skin and black hair typified the first European descriptions of the Roma. As a result of integration with Europeans over the centuries, Roma today are also found to have light skin and hair.

There have been many persecutions or pogroms against the Roma throughout history. The Nazi terror of World War II was responsible for more than 1.5 million Roma deaths in the Holocaust. There were many violent attacks against the Romani immigrants and refugees. The government did little to stop these violent attacks against the Roma. The racist violence against Roma escalated after the fall of Communism.

There are many anti-Roma attitudes that exist in America. The misinterpretations of the Romani people in books, film, and television have fueled the negative stereotypes.



In Marshall we have a local legend about a gypsy or Roma. Many gypsies traveled through the area of Marshall. They were considered evil and were not very well liked in this town. A gypsy, by the name of Miranda Copper, was traveling through Marshall when she was befriended by one of the townsfolk. Most people did not like gypsies; they were even afraid of them. Copper was very grateful that she had found someone who did not treat her badly. She put a good curse on Marshall, explaining that Marshall would never be destroyed by a tornado. Miranda Copper died on March 3, 1934. She is now buried in the Marshall Cemetery outside of town. Although there have been a few brushes with twisters, Marshall has never had any serious tornadoes in town. Some people do not believe in the good curse of the gypsy, but others feel safer because of the gypsy's curse.

Another interesting piece of folklore for those who like visiting cemeteries is the story of Emily Scott. Her tombstone is in the Walnut Prairie Cemetery, next to the Brick Church. The story is about how Emily Scott went insane. Emily was the wife of B.P. Scott. In 1856, she was hit 14 times in the head with the iron king ball of a wagon, by a robber. The blow to the head broke her skull. After this happened, the tombstone states that Scott had many periods of insanity. One period of insanity caused her to catch her clothes on fire. She died five days later in 1871, as a

result of injuries received in the fire. She was 53 years old when she died. Her tombstone tells her tragic story.



Another interesting folktale in this area is the naming of Fox Road, southwest of Marshall. According to an Anderson Township resident, Carroll Kannmacher, the road was named after Sebastian Fox. Sebastian Fox was a schoolteacher, minister and tax collector. He was riding his horse home during a storm late at night, when a robber was waiting for him at the top of Fox Hill now known as Fox Road. When Fox reached the top of the hill, the robber shot him. Fox's white horse spooked and took off, in turn catching his

foot in the stirrup. Fox was dragged by his horse all the way to his home. His head was nearly beaten off and so destroyed that his relatives could not tell who he was.

Now it is stated that on stormy nights, around midnight the ghost of Fox returns. He is sometimes known as the headless horseman. He rides up and down the hill on his white horse. Fox was buried in the cemetery, which is right off the road on the hill.

Another common type of folklore is weather lore. Everyone has heard the tales about the woolly worm that can predict the type of winter we will have. Another way to tell the type of winter to come is to see if the squirrels gather many nuts. If so, expect a hard winter. Some folklorists suggest a type of formula to predict when certain weather conditions will occur. For example, subtract 12 from the air temperature at 7 p.m. for the next morning's temperature. Whatever day the first day of thunder in February occurs indicates the date of the last hard frost in May. Traditional forecasting seems to be more accurate. A halo around the moon means that rain will occur in one or two days. Curved bands of colored light, which appear in pairs, means that it will rain in one or two days. These curved bands of colored light are also called sundogs.

In every town, there are always stories or tales that people pass down to each other. It gives the town more color, and gives people something to tell at campouts or sleep-overs. These tales have been told for many years. This folklore will be told to the people of this town, for many years to come. The folklore of Marshall is a major part of its history.