

Northeast Missouri Folklore

Local Legends and Tales

Bridge Creek and the Panthers

Rumors of black panthers roaming in Northeast Missouri persist even today. Bobby Poston, a member of this year's history class, shared this story with us. This is a story that has been passed down in his family for many years.

There was a little settlement north of Rutledge, Missouri, situated in the deepest woods and windingest roads. Situated here is Bridge Creek. This is where my ancestors first settled after coming here from Germany. The forests were so thick that every treetop interlocked with the other trees. So this meant that animals could travel overhead in the treetops. One of the animals that traveled, rumor has it, was the black panther.

My great uncle Bill, who was single, was travelling into town at a late hour for some unknown reason. He was coming from Bridge Creek to Edina, and since it was looking like rain, and with no top on the wagon, he wanted to get to town before it started raining. He always wore a stovepipe hat and smoked a pipe.

As the road entered the densest of the forest, my uncle kept noticing forms in the treetops as the lightning exploded. He was aware of the rumors of panthers, so he was starting to get on edge to get to town.

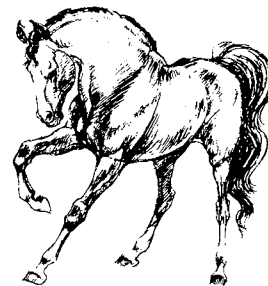


As he crossed a culvert, a loud echo was heard which raised the hair on my uncles toes, and did worse things to the horse's blood pressure. My uncle started to sing to calm both his and the horse's nerves.

Suddenly from the adjoining treetops, his hat was swiped from his head. Let me tell you—that did it! From then on, it was a race to see if the horse or uncle Bill would get to Edina first. He gave the horse the reins.

The next day a hunting party was formed and they spent two full days and nights hunting. Tracks were seen, but no panther. This story still carries on.

The White Horse



One afternoon back in the time we went to grandma's house for dinner every Sunday, my father and his two brothers were a-sittin' on the porch after the meal. They saw from a distance a large, beautiful, white horse, with a long flowing tail galloping across the fields, jumpin' every fence. When it came along to my grandfather's fence, it jumped, but its back feet were caught in the wire—it was held fast. My father and his brothers went and laid hold of its legs, which surprisingly 'nough it didn't kick us, and freed it. The horse then stopped, turned, looked at them, and then vanished into mid-air!

No, they hadn't been drinkin' corn whiskey.

—Adapted from a tale told by a resident of LaPlata.



Route P

This is Adair County's version of a gory legend that is also found in many parts of the United States. The legend always follows the same theme, but is usually localized, (meaning that a particular local geographic spot becomes the setting), in this case a dirt road off Route P.

A while back on a dirt road by Route P, a couple were parked. When it was time to leave the man tried to start the car but couldn't because he was out of gas. So the man decided that he was going to walk to the nearest house and get a can of gas to fill the car enough to get them to town. He told his girl friend to lock the doors and lie down and never look up for any reason. Later that night she heard scratching on the car and many thuds. Finally the next morning a patrolman knocked out the window and identified himself. The lady unlocked the door and the patrolman told her to close her eyes and not to turn around, but she did and saw her boyfriend strung all over the car—limbs dangling, and the decapitated head on the hood ornament.