

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:05,000

An iconic bridge plagued by a deadly disease.

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00:00:05,000 --> 00:00:08,000

These people literally were in agony.

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00:00:08,000 --> 00:00:12,000

A national park of a buried secret.

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00:00:12,000 --> 00:00:15,000

If you think about it, this is kind of a crazy thing to do.

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00:00:15,000 --> 00:00:20,000

And a bizarre sculpture that's out of this world.

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00:00:20,000 --> 00:00:26,000

Loud explosions, smoke in the sky. Something is going on.

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00:00:27,000 --> 00:00:31,000

Sometimes the greatest secrets lie in plain sight.

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00:00:31,000 --> 00:00:34,000

These are monumental mysteries.

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00:00:42,000 --> 00:00:46,000

The capital of the nation between 1785 and 1790.

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00:00:46,000 --> 00:00:50,000

Today, New York is the most populous city in the United States.

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00:00:50,000 --> 00:00:55,000

It is also home to one of the most iconic landmarks in the world.

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00:00:56,000 --> 00:00:58,000

It is about a mile in length.

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00:00:58,000 --> 00:01:00,000

The towers are made of main granite.

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00:01:00,000 --> 00:01:03,000

At dusk, the cables appear almost black against the sky,

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00:01:03,000 --> 00:01:05,000

producing a wonderful web-like effect.

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00:01:05,000 --> 00:01:08,000

It's a truly remarkable and beautiful bridge.

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00:01:09,000 --> 00:01:11,000

It is the Brooklyn Bridge.

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00:01:11,000 --> 00:01:14,000

Originally designed for horse-drawn wagons,

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00:01:14,000 --> 00:01:22,000

this majestic crossing now bears the weight of 120,000 cars and trucks every day.

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00:01:23,000 --> 00:01:26,000

But as historian Richard Hall points out,

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00:01:26,000 --> 00:01:28,000

at the time of its construction,

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00:01:28,000 --> 00:01:33,000

this epic span was the site of a sinister medical mystery.

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00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:37,000

These people literally were in agony and died in agony.

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00:01:37,000 --> 00:01:40,000

It's like tearing the flesh from your bones.

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00:01:41,000 --> 00:01:46,000

What dark secret lies at the heart of New York's Brooklyn Bridge?

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00:01:47,000 --> 00:01:50,000

New York, the 1860s.

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00:01:50,000 --> 00:01:54,000

Manhattan and its neighbor to the east, Brooklyn, are booming.

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00:01:54,000 --> 00:01:59,000

In just 20 years, the population of the two cities has more than tripled,

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00:01:59,000 --> 00:02:03,000

putting a massive strain on the ferry boats that shuttle goods and people

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00:02:03,000 --> 00:02:05,000

between the shores of the East River.

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00:02:05,000 --> 00:02:07,000

The solution seems obvious.

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00:02:09,000 --> 00:02:11,000

A bridge.

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00:02:11,000 --> 00:02:14,000

And the most beautiful bridge in the world.

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00:02:14,000 --> 00:02:16,000

The bridge.

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00:02:16,000 --> 00:02:21,000

And the man charged with building it is German-born engineer John Robling.

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00:02:21,000 --> 00:02:25,000

But when he dies in an accident while surveying the bridge site,

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00:02:25,000 --> 00:02:30,000

his 32-year-old son, Washington Robling, is thrust into the daunting job.

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00:02:31,000 --> 00:02:34,000

The Robling's plan calls for the longest suspension bridge in the world.

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00:02:34,000 --> 00:02:38,000

This is not only an ambitious, but it's a mammoth task.

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00:02:39,000 --> 00:02:42,000

And by far the biggest challenge facing the young engineer

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00:02:42,000 --> 00:02:47,000

is how to secure the two support towers in the rapid currents of the East River.

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00:02:47,000 --> 00:02:53,000

At the time, the Sandy Riverbed was not considered capable of supporting such heavy towers.

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00:02:53,000 --> 00:02:57,000

So Robling must dig down and anchor them on bedrock,

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00:02:57,000 --> 00:03:00,000

more than 100 feet beneath the water's surface.

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00:03:02,000 --> 00:03:08,000

To do this, Robling builds huge watertight retaining structures called caissons.

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00:03:08,000 --> 00:03:11,000

A caisson is basically an upturned box filled with compressed air.

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00:03:12,000 --> 00:03:18,000

Via a series of access tubes, Robling sends workers into these pressurized caissons,

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00:03:18,000 --> 00:03:24,000

which are designed to hold the waters at bay, allowing the men to excavate the Sandy Riverbed.

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00:03:24,000 --> 00:03:29,000

Workers about a hundred at a time would go into the caisson and dig down.

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00:03:29,000 --> 00:03:36,000

When the men eventually reach stable bedrock, Robling plans to fill the caissons in with concrete,

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00:03:36,000 --> 00:03:40,000

leaving them in place as the very foundation of the bridge itself.

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00:03:43,000 --> 00:03:48,000

But the conditions inside the caissons could hardly be worse.

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00:03:48,000 --> 00:03:51,000

The work down there is extremely dangerous.

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00:03:51,000 --> 00:03:55,000

You're working in compressed air, the gas lamps, it's hot.

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00:03:57,000 --> 00:04:03,000

Despite the horrific conditions, the Brooklyn caisson reaches bedrock in a matter of months.

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00:04:03,000 --> 00:04:07,000

But shortly after digging begins on the deeper Manhattan side,

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00:04:07,000 --> 00:04:11,000

workers are confronted by a totally unexpected danger.

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00:04:13,000 --> 00:04:16,000

A mysterious and painful illness.

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00:04:16,000 --> 00:04:23,000

There was common symptoms, headaches, vomiting, joint pain, there was a convulsions, paralysis of limbs.

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00:04:23,000 --> 00:04:24,000

It was terrible.

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00:04:25,000 --> 00:04:29,000

And it's not long before the situation gets worse.

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00:04:29,000 --> 00:04:35,000

A German worker had terrible pains all over his body and went into convulsions and died.

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00:04:35,000 --> 00:04:40,000

Workers dropping like flies, nobody has any clue what's going on.

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00:04:40,000 --> 00:04:47,000

As this sinister affliction continues to claim the lives of workers, many in the city start to wonder,

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00:04:47,000 --> 00:04:50,000

is the Brooklyn Bridge doomed?

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00:04:55,000 --> 00:05:04,000

In an effort to prevent further deaths, a physician named Dr. Andrew Smith is charged with investigating the unexplained illness.

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00:05:04,000 --> 00:05:11,000

And after examining the affected workers, he names the condition, caisson disease.

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00:05:13,000 --> 00:05:17,000

By the spring of 1872, he's narrowed it down.

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00:05:17,000 --> 00:05:23,000

Workers are going into an environment of compressed air, they're coming out, and when they come out, there's problems.

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00:05:23,000 --> 00:05:29,000

Smith suspects that the illness has something to do with the men returning to normal air conditions

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00:05:29,000 --> 00:05:33,000

after working in the pressurized air at the bottom of the river.

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00:05:34,000 --> 00:05:41,000

But before the doctor is able to prove his theory, and with a death toll from the disease standing at 20,

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00:05:41,000 --> 00:05:45,000

Chief Engineer Washington Robling intervenes.

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00:05:45,000 --> 00:05:50,000

Washington Robling makes a really courageous but also really amazing decision.

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00:05:52,000 --> 00:05:53,000

He stops digging.

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00:05:54,000 --> 00:05:57,000

He tests the sand that they are on at the time.

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00:05:57,000 --> 00:06:03,000

He was a great geologist and he decided that the sand that they were on hadn't moved for about 20 million years.

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00:06:04,000 --> 00:06:10,000

And even though many had feared the sand would be unsuitable as an anchor point for large structures,

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00:06:10,000 --> 00:06:16,000

his tests show that the sediment beneath the Manhattan Tower is as stable as bedrock.

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00:06:16,000 --> 00:06:21,000

So instead of reaching bedrock, he takes all the workers out of there and he'd build in the caisson.

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00:06:22,000 --> 00:06:24,000

Robling's gamble pays off.

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00:06:24,000 --> 00:06:29,000

The bridge is successfully completed and opens to traffic in 1883.

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00:06:29,000 --> 00:06:32,000

To this day, the New York Tower stands on the sand.

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00:06:34,000 --> 00:06:38,000

But the question remains, was Dr. Smith correct?

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00:06:40,000 --> 00:06:44,000

Was the mystery illness really related to the compressed air in the caissons?

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00:06:47,000 --> 00:06:53,000

Following his experiences working on the Brooklyn Bridge, Smith develops a ground-breaking decompression chamber

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00:06:53,000 --> 00:06:57,000

that workers could pass through after toiling underground.

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00:06:57,000 --> 00:07:01,000

When a functioning decompression chamber is finally built,

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00:07:01,000 --> 00:07:08,000

countless workers on future bridge and tunnel projects are spared the terrible fate of caisson disease,

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00:07:08,000 --> 00:07:14,000

which is now known as the bends and most commonly associated with scuba diving.

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00:07:16,000 --> 00:07:22,000

Today, the robust beauty of the Brooklyn Bridge stands out against the New York skyline

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00:07:22,000 --> 00:07:27,000

as a lasting memorial to the men who sacrificed everything to build it.

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00:07:32,000 --> 00:07:39,000

Atop a 32-mile vein of some of the world's finest white stone is the marble city of Silicoga, Alabama.

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00:07:41,000 --> 00:07:47,000

Here in front of the city hall and carved from the creamy rock sits an oddly shaped sculpture,

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00:07:47,000 --> 00:07:52,000

a twisting, churning mass with a tangle of tails stretching up towards the sky.

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00:07:53,000 --> 00:08:02,000

It's about eight feet tall and it's got a big round base and off of it are carved marble flames and smoke

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00:08:02,000 --> 00:08:05,000

as it seems to be plunging out of the sky.

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00:08:07,000 --> 00:08:14,000

According to curator John Hall, this unusual monument is a fitting tribute to an earth-shattering event.

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00:08:14,000 --> 00:08:18,000

It got everyone's attention all over the United States.

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00:08:18,000 --> 00:08:22,000

It's never been repeated in the 50-year history since it happened.

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00:08:22,000 --> 00:08:26,000

So what momentous occurrence does the sculpture commemorate?

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00:08:26,000 --> 00:08:30,000

And how did it set off a storm of fear and panic?

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00:08:34,000 --> 00:08:37,000

November 30th, 1954, Silicoga.

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00:08:39,000 --> 00:08:45,000

34-year-old housewife Ann Hodges is resting on her couch when something extraordinary happens.

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00:08:46,000 --> 00:08:51,000

All of a sudden there is an explosion by and the air is full of dust.

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00:08:52,000 --> 00:08:56,000

An intense pain shoots through Ann's hand and hip.

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00:08:56,000 --> 00:09:00,000

When Ann jumps up, something falls off the couch and onto the floor.

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00:09:00,000 --> 00:09:07,000

There is a smooth, satin-finished black rock about the size of a grapefruit.

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00:09:07,000 --> 00:09:09,000

She doesn't know what it is.

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00:09:10,000 --> 00:09:14,000

Looking up, Hodges sees a gaping hole in the ceiling.

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00:09:14,000 --> 00:09:18,000

It seems that the strange object has fallen from the sky,

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00:09:18,000 --> 00:09:21,000

crashed through the roof of her house and hit her.

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00:09:21,000 --> 00:09:24,000

Her hand is swollen. It's quite a blow.

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00:09:24,000 --> 00:09:27,000

A shell-shocked Hodges calls the police.

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00:09:28,000 --> 00:09:31,000

But she's not the only one to have witnessed something strange.

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00:09:31,000 --> 00:09:35,000

Officers soon find themselves overwhelmed with calls

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00:09:35,000 --> 00:09:39,000

from people reporting even more bizarre and frightening incidents.

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00:09:41,000 --> 00:09:43,000

There's loud explosions in Montgomery.

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00:09:43,000 --> 00:09:46,000

One kid reports being almost knocked off his bike.

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00:09:46,000 --> 00:09:50,000

It seems these unexplained events aren't just limited to Alabama.

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00:09:50,000 --> 00:09:54,000

There were people in Mississippi and Georgia

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00:09:54,000 --> 00:09:57,000

when this fireball descends through the atmosphere.

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00:09:58,000 --> 00:10:01,000

Loud explosions, vapor trails, smoke in the sky.

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00:10:01,000 --> 00:10:05,000

Everyone is aware that something is going on.

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00:10:06,000 --> 00:10:09,000

As panicked reports stream in from across the South,

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00:10:09,000 --> 00:10:14,000

the sleepy town where it all began is thrust into the spotlight.

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00:10:14,000 --> 00:10:20,000

The idea of something falling out of the sky in little ol' silicog is just not one of the things you expect.

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00:10:21,000 --> 00:10:24,000

Police call in the United States Air Force to investigate.

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00:10:25,000 --> 00:10:29,000

A move that has the unintended effect of further spooking a populace

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00:10:29,000 --> 00:10:32,000

already steeped in Cold War paranoia.

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00:10:33,000 --> 00:10:36,000

There's a growing fear of the Russians and nuclear weapons.

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00:10:36,000 --> 00:10:42,000

There's a lot of reasons to be afraid of something falling out of the sky and hitting a lady.

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00:10:44,000 --> 00:10:48,000

With the military leading the investigation, people start to wonder,

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00:10:48,000 --> 00:10:50,000

is America under attack?

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00:10:50,000 --> 00:10:53,000

It's 1954 in Silicoga, Alabama.

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00:10:53,000 --> 00:10:58,000

A bizarre dark colored object crashes into the home of Anne Hodges.

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00:10:58,000 --> 00:11:01,000

And she's not the only one to experience something strange.

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00:11:01,000 --> 00:11:07,000

Reports of explosions in the sky soon come pouring in from across the South.

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00:11:07,000 --> 00:11:11,000

With the Cold War at its height, people start to wonder,

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00:11:11,000 --> 00:11:14,000

is the Russian military still in the air?

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00:11:14,000 --> 00:11:19,000

The Air Force takes the object that crashed through Anne Hodges' roof away for testing.

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00:11:19,000 --> 00:11:24,000

And although some locals fear that it is from a Soviet aircraft or missile,

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00:11:24,000 --> 00:11:30,000

officials are unable to find any evidence that Russian planes were anywhere in the area at the time.

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00:11:30,000 --> 00:11:34,000

So speculation quickly turns to a new reality.

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00:11:34,000 --> 00:11:37,000

The Russian military is now in the air.

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00:11:37,000 --> 00:11:40,000

The Russian military is now in the air.

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00:11:41,000 --> 00:11:44,000

This is 1954.

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00:11:44,000 --> 00:11:48,000

The flying saucer hysteria is in full swing.

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00:11:48,000 --> 00:11:56,000

The Air Force have begun Project Blue Book in which they examine all of these supposed extraterrestrial objects.

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00:12:00,000 --> 00:12:05,000

And when military officials examine the object that hit Anne Hodges,

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00:12:05,000 --> 00:12:07,000

the object that hit an Hodges,

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00:12:07,000 --> 00:12:10,000

they make a startling discovery.

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00:12:10,000 --> 00:12:13,000

Not only is it not man-made,

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00:12:13,000 --> 00:12:16,000

but it is also not from planet Earth.

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00:12:16,000 --> 00:12:18,000

It's a meteorite!

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00:12:20,000 --> 00:12:23,000

Scientists determined that a huge meteorite,

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00:12:23,000 --> 00:12:26,000

likely weighing over 100 pounds,

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00:12:26,000 --> 00:12:28,000

had entered the Earth's atmosphere,

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00:12:28,000 --> 00:12:30,000

creating the flaming fireball

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00:12:30,000 --> 00:12:32,000

that was seen all across the South.

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00:12:33,000 --> 00:12:37,000

This was visible for 100 miles in every direction.

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00:12:37,000 --> 00:12:41,000

And as it breaks up, there are multiple smoke trails,

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00:12:41,000 --> 00:12:44,000

there are several sonic booms.

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00:12:46,000 --> 00:12:49,000

While much of the space rock was incinerated,

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00:12:49,000 --> 00:12:52,000

a few pieces plunged to the ground,

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00:12:52,000 --> 00:12:55,000

including an 8.5 pound fragment

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00:12:55,000 --> 00:12:59,000

that hit but miraculously did not kill an Hodges.

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00:12:59,000 --> 00:13:02,000

And Hodges has the distinction of being

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00:13:02,000 --> 00:13:06,000

the only person authentically struck by a meteorite

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00:13:06,000 --> 00:13:08,000

in modern times.

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00:13:08,000 --> 00:13:11,000

It probably would have seriously injured her

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00:13:11,000 --> 00:13:14,000

if it had not been slowed down by the roof,

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00:13:14,000 --> 00:13:17,000

the ceiling, and the padding of the quilts.

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00:13:19,000 --> 00:13:25,000

In 2009, 55 years after this extraordinary astronomical event,

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00:13:25,000 --> 00:13:28,000

renowned sculptor Don Lawler creates this statue.

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00:13:29,000 --> 00:13:32,000

Crafted from the region's finest marble,

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00:13:32,000 --> 00:13:35,000

it's called Falling Star.

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00:13:35,000 --> 00:13:39,000

And today it stands in Silicoga for all to admire.

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00:13:39,000 --> 00:13:43,000

A lasting testament of this small town's historic visitor

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00:13:43,000 --> 00:13:46,000

from the outer reaches of space.

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00:13:53,000 --> 00:13:55,000

In southeastern California,

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00:13:55,000 --> 00:13:57,000

in the foothills of the Mojave Desert,

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00:13:57,000 --> 00:14:01,000

lie 800,000 acres of sweeping sandy plains

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00:14:01,000 --> 00:14:04,000

and majestic granite formations.

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00:14:04,000 --> 00:14:07,000

It is a strangely surreal landscape.

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00:14:07,000 --> 00:14:09,000

It's like going to another planet.

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00:14:09,000 --> 00:14:15,000

Named after the prolific plants that cover the terrain,

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00:14:15,000 --> 00:14:19,000

this is the Joshua Tree National Park.

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00:14:19,000 --> 00:14:21,000

But as music promoter John McKinney knows,

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00:14:21,000 --> 00:14:25,000

there's more to this desert than just its beauty.

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00:14:25,000 --> 00:14:29,000

It's also at the center of one of the most incredible incidents

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00:14:29,000 --> 00:14:31,000

in rock and roll history.

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00:14:31,000 --> 00:14:34,000

So what happened out here in the wilds

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00:14:34,000 --> 00:14:36,000

of this beautiful national monument?

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00:14:40,000 --> 00:14:44,000

1973, Los Angeles, California.

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00:14:44,000 --> 00:14:49,000

The city is experiencing an unparalleled musical renaissance.

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00:14:49,000 --> 00:14:52,000

And riding high on this wave of creativity

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00:14:52,000 --> 00:14:55,000

is the former singer and guitarist with the birds.

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00:14:55,000 --> 00:14:58,000

Graham Parsons.

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00:14:58,000 --> 00:15:00,000

When Graham joined the birds,

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00:15:00,000 --> 00:15:02,000

they were really America's answer to the Beatles.

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00:15:02,000 --> 00:15:06,000

Graham came in and influenced things in a country direction,

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00:15:06,000 --> 00:15:09,000

which kind of blew a lot of people's minds back then.

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00:15:09,000 --> 00:15:14,000

Now a successful solo artist, Parsons, is at the peak of his fame.

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00:15:14,000 --> 00:15:18,000

He was living very much the rock and roll lifestyle.

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00:15:18,000 --> 00:15:24,000

And one of his favorite spots to unwind is Joshua Tree National Park.

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00:15:24,000 --> 00:15:28,000

Joshua Tree is a place where you can just get away from everything.

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00:15:28,000 --> 00:15:31,000

And you can have a good time out here.

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00:15:31,000 --> 00:15:34,000

Problem is you can also have too good of a time out here.

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00:15:37,000 --> 00:15:42,000

On September 18th, Parsons is partying at his regular hangout,

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00:15:42,000 --> 00:15:44,000

the Joshua Tree Inn.

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00:15:44,000 --> 00:15:47,000

The Joshua Tree Inn is a very quiet, low-key place.

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00:15:47,000 --> 00:15:51,000

It was also a great place to go out and do drugs and do a lot of heavy drinking

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00:15:51,000 --> 00:15:54,000

because everybody would leave you alone out here.

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00:15:55,000 --> 00:16:00,000

But a little after 8 p.m., the good times suddenly take a dark turn.

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00:16:02,000 --> 00:16:06,000

Graham apparently had an ingested, a little too much of everything,

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00:16:06,000 --> 00:16:08,000

and he had passed out.

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00:16:08,000 --> 00:16:13,000

His friends tried to revive him, but they just couldn't bring him back.

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00:16:13,000 --> 00:16:17,000

Pyramidics came out, and he was pronounced dead.

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00:16:19,000 --> 00:16:23,000

As the music world mourns the loss of an inspiring young talent,

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00:16:23,000 --> 00:16:29,000

the musician's stepfather, Bob Parsons, flies into Los Angeles International Airport

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00:16:29,000 --> 00:16:35,000

to begin the grim task of transporting Graham's body back to Louisiana for the funeral.

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00:16:35,000 --> 00:16:39,000

But when he went in to get the body, they didn't have it.

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00:16:40,000 --> 00:16:43,000

Nobody knew where Graham had gone.

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00:16:43,000 --> 00:16:47,000

It seems someone has stolen Graham Parsons' body.

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00:16:49,000 --> 00:16:55,000

In the ensuing investigation, police learned that while the rock star's body was being held at LAX,

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00:16:55,000 --> 00:17:02,000

two men claiming to represent the Parsons family approached airport staff and took away the corpse.

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00:17:04,000 --> 00:17:07,000

So who stole Graham Parsons' body?

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00:17:07,000 --> 00:17:09,000

And where is it now?

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00:17:16,000 --> 00:17:18,000

It's 1973.

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00:17:18,000 --> 00:17:22,000

Two men claiming to represent Graham Parsons' family

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00:17:22,000 --> 00:17:27,000

have stolen the dead rock star's corpse from Los Angeles International Airport.

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00:17:27,000 --> 00:17:32,000

Who they were and what they did with the body is a surprising mystery.

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00:17:33,000 --> 00:17:38,000

As police struggle to make sense of this highly unusual crime,

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00:17:38,000 --> 00:17:43,000

150 miles away in the Joshua Tree National Park,

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00:17:43,000 --> 00:17:49,000

a discovery is about to be made that will break the case wide open.

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00:17:49,000 --> 00:17:53,000

A park ranger received a phone call that there was a fire in the park.

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00:17:53,000 --> 00:17:56,000

When he got there, he found a charred coffin,

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00:17:56,000 --> 00:17:59,000

and what looked to be human remains in that coffin.

240

00:18:02,000 --> 00:18:05,000

When the authorities examine the evidence,

241

00:18:05,000 --> 00:18:11,000

they learn that these are in fact the remains of Graham Parsons.

242

00:18:11,000 --> 00:18:17,000

But who would want to steal a dead body and then burn it in the desert?

243

00:18:17,000 --> 00:18:21,000

The answer would come from the most unlikely of sources.

244

00:18:22,000 --> 00:18:25,000

A few days after the body is found,

245

00:18:25,000 --> 00:18:29,000

a man approaches police and makes an astounding confession.

246

00:18:29,000 --> 00:18:34,000

He claims that he is behind the mysterious disappearance of Graham Parsons' body.

247

00:18:34,000 --> 00:18:40,000

His name is Phil Kaufman, the late performer's road manager and close friend.

248

00:18:40,000 --> 00:18:44,000

Phil Kaufman knew that Graham had won a regular burial.

249

00:18:46,000 --> 00:18:50,000

He wanted to be burned in the desert up in Joshua Tree.

250

00:18:50,000 --> 00:18:57,000

According to Kaufman, in the months before Parsons' death, the two friends had made a pact.

251

00:18:57,000 --> 00:19:00,000

Graham and Phil decided that if one of them died,

252

00:19:00,000 --> 00:19:05,000

the other one would take him out to the desert to be burned down in Joshua Tree.

253

00:19:07,000 --> 00:19:11,000

Kaufman explains that when Parsons' body was sent to LAX,

254

00:19:11,000 --> 00:19:15,000

he and a friend hatched an elaborate plot.

255

00:19:15,000 --> 00:19:18,000

With a rented hearse and a set of forged papers,

256

00:19:18,000 --> 00:19:22,000

the two set out for the airport where, amazingly,

257

00:19:22,000 --> 00:19:25,000

they convinced an employee to hand over the remains.

258

00:19:25,000 --> 00:19:29,000

If you think about it, this is a really kind of a crazy thing to do.

259

00:19:29,000 --> 00:19:32,000

You don't find too many people today that would stick their neck out like that.

260

00:19:34,000 --> 00:19:38,000

After driving for hours, they finally arrive at Joshua Tree.

261

00:19:39,000 --> 00:19:44,000

After Phil Kaufman said his goodbyes, he poured five gallons of gas in the coffin,

262

00:19:44,000 --> 00:19:51,000

stepped back, lit the match, and that was it. He was gone.

263

00:19:52,000 --> 00:19:59,000

Remarkably, because stealing a body isn't against the law in California,

264

00:19:59,000 --> 00:20:04,000

Kaufman is only fined \$1,000 for the theft of the coffin.

265

00:20:05,000 --> 00:20:09,000

Parsons' remains are eventually shipped to New Orleans for burial.

266

00:20:11,000 --> 00:20:15,000

But today, legions of fans still flock to a makeshift memorial

267

00:20:15,000 --> 00:20:18,000

at the inn where the rock and roll legend passed away.

268

00:20:19,000 --> 00:20:23,000

Linking him forever to this most beautiful and wild of monuments,

269

00:20:23,000 --> 00:20:26,000

Joshua Tree National Park.

270

00:20:31,000 --> 00:20:35,000

The small agricultural community of Enterprise, Alabama

271

00:20:35,000 --> 00:20:39,000

is home to one of the country's most unusual monuments.

272

00:20:39,000 --> 00:20:45,000

Downtown, in the center of a fountain, stands a striking female figure,

273

00:20:45,000 --> 00:20:49,000

13 feet tall and made from the finest Italian alabaster.

274

00:20:49,000 --> 00:20:53,000

She bears above her head a large golden pedestal,

275

00:20:53,000 --> 00:20:59,000

upon which is placed a big black bug.

276

00:21:01,000 --> 00:21:06,000

It has six legs, big round black body, and a long, long picture.

277

00:21:07,000 --> 00:21:12,000

It's said that this is the only statue in the world that commemorates an insect.

278

00:21:12,000 --> 00:21:17,000

In fact, this ugly, beaked bug literally altered the course of history.

279

00:21:18,000 --> 00:21:23,000

It changed not only the city of Enterprise, but the South as we know it.

280

00:21:24,000 --> 00:21:29,000

So what is the story behind this bizarre monument to a bug?

281

00:21:31,000 --> 00:21:35,000

1915, Cotton is king in Southern Alabama.

282

00:21:35,000 --> 00:21:41,000

Thanks to the fluffy fiber, agricultural communities like Enterprise are boom towns.

283

00:21:41,000 --> 00:21:44,000

Cotton was relatively easy to grow here.

284

00:21:44,000 --> 00:21:49,000

It produced large quantities and it supplied the nation.

285

00:21:50,000 --> 00:21:55,000

One of the most successful farmers in Enterprise is one CW Baston.

286

00:21:56,000 --> 00:21:59,000

And as the profits made from cotton continue to grow,

287

00:21:59,000 --> 00:22:04,000

Baston and his fellow farmers eventually all but abandon their other crops.

288

00:22:04,000 --> 00:22:09,000

CW Baston had a 125 acre farm that was dedicated to cotton.

289

00:22:09,000 --> 00:22:12,000

He depended on cotton for his income.

290

00:22:13,000 --> 00:22:18,000

But little do Baston and his neighbors know their good fortune is about to end.

291

00:22:20,000 --> 00:22:27,000

One day, CW Baston is making his daily crop inspection when he sees something strange.

292

00:22:27,000 --> 00:22:32,000

Ugly, pimple-like scars on some of the buds of his cotton plants.

293

00:22:33,000 --> 00:22:37,000

Perplexed, Baston destroys the afflicted plants.

294

00:22:37,000 --> 00:22:42,000

But within weeks, the sinister affliction has spread throughout his fields.

295

00:22:42,000 --> 00:22:46,000

And when harvest comes, the crop is worthless.

296

00:22:47,000 --> 00:22:50,000

For the young farmer, the stakes couldn't be higher.

297

00:22:50,000 --> 00:22:54,000

Mr. Baston borrowed money to plant his crop.

298

00:22:54,000 --> 00:22:59,000

If he doesn't produce a crop, then it literally puts him out of business.

299

00:23:00,000 --> 00:23:02,000

And Baston is not alone.

300

00:23:02,000 --> 00:23:06,000

His neighbors are also inflicted with the same strange infestation.

301

00:23:08,000 --> 00:23:14,000

So what is destroying the cotton crop and threatening to bankrupt the entire community?

302

00:23:15,000 --> 00:23:20,000

The answer comes when scientists analyze samples of the decimated plants

303

00:23:20,000 --> 00:23:23,000

and deliver their devastating verdict.

304

00:23:23,000 --> 00:23:25,000

It's the bull weevil.

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00:23:27,000 --> 00:23:30,000

The bull weevil is this very small bug only a quarter of an inch long

306

00:23:30,000 --> 00:23:35,000

that starves the plant of the nutrients that makes the cotton.

307

00:23:35,000 --> 00:23:38,000

Bull weevils work very quietly, silently.

308

00:23:38,000 --> 00:23:40,000

It's horrible to see.

309

00:23:41,000 --> 00:23:45,000

It's thought that the pesky pest originated in Mexico

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00:23:45,000 --> 00:23:49,000

and hitched a ride into the U.S. on the Galveston Hurricane,

311

00:23:49,000 --> 00:23:54,000

destroying cotton crops not only in Alabama, but across the South.

312

00:23:56,000 --> 00:24:03,000

Desperate to save his livelihood, C.W. Baston does all he can to stave off this insidious insect.

313

00:24:03,000 --> 00:24:08,000

He tried burning the crops. He tried getting rid of them with whiskey.

314

00:24:08,000 --> 00:24:12,000

He tried getting rid of them with oil. He tried everything.

315

00:24:12,000 --> 00:24:18,000

Nothing worked. The pest itself was in proportion to a biblical plague.

316

00:24:19,000 --> 00:24:23,000

And this plague of weevils is so bad that in the following years,

317

00:24:23,000 --> 00:24:26,000

countless sharecroppers are forced off the land.

318

00:24:26,000 --> 00:24:32,000

This mass exodus of southern workers to the north leaves behind acres of empty fields

319

00:24:32,000 --> 00:24:39,000

and scores of abandoned farms, contributing to what would eventually become known as the Great Migration.

320

00:24:40,000 --> 00:24:46,000

Farmers were completely devastated. They had to leave. They had no choice.

321

00:24:46,000 --> 00:24:49,000

But one man is determined to not give up.

322

00:24:50,000 --> 00:24:54,000

So can C.W. Baston defeat the plague of bull weevils?

323

00:24:55,000 --> 00:25:00,000

It's 1916. An incredibly destructive insect called the Bull Weevil

324

00:25:00,000 --> 00:25:06,000

has decimated the cotton crop across the American South, forcing countless farmers off their land.

325

00:25:06,000 --> 00:25:11,000

But one man refuses to go. An Alabama sharecropper named C.W. Baston,

326

00:25:11,000 --> 00:25:15,000

who's determined to defeat the weevil if it's the last thing he does.

327

00:25:15,000 --> 00:25:19,000

But who will win? Baston or the buck?

328

00:25:19,000 --> 00:25:25,000

After months of wrestling with the problem, Baston is approached by a man named H.M. Sessions,

329

00:25:25,000 --> 00:25:32,000

who claims he has the answer. Sessions suggests that Baston tried planting a strange new seed

330

00:25:32,000 --> 00:25:36,000

that he has brought back with him from his recent trip to Virginia.

331

00:25:37,000 --> 00:25:40,000

It's none other than the humble peanut.

332

00:25:41,000 --> 00:25:46,000

And the man who has the best seed in the world is the man who has the best seed.

333

00:25:46,000 --> 00:25:49,000

He's a better farmer than the humble peanut.

334

00:25:49,000 --> 00:25:54,000

And when Baston sows the seeds, he is stunned by the results.

335

00:25:54,000 --> 00:25:58,000

He was able to pass debt plus make profit.

336

00:25:59,000 --> 00:26:04,000

Once enterprise farmers realize that peanut crops are impervious to the bull weevil,

337

00:26:04,000 --> 00:26:06,000

they begin planting them too.

338

00:26:07,000 --> 00:26:15,000

Once peanuts was introduced to agriculture, the economy went from famine to feast overnight.

339

00:26:15,000 --> 00:26:17,000

The rest is history.

340

00:26:18,000 --> 00:26:22,000

And with more and more Americans clamoring for the tasty treat,

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00:26:22,000 --> 00:26:27,000

enterprise eventually becomes the largest peanut producing community in the nation.

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00:26:27,000 --> 00:26:32,000

And as luck would have it, the peanut is even more profitable than cotton.

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00:26:33,000 --> 00:26:39,000

In the years following, an effective pesticide is developed to combat the bull weevil.

344

00:26:39,000 --> 00:26:44,000

And today, cotton is flourishing once again across the South.

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00:26:45,000 --> 00:26:50,000

But in Enterprise, Alabama, the creepy critter is not forgotten.

346

00:26:50,000 --> 00:26:55,000

On December 11th, 1919, the bull weevil monument is unveiled.

347

00:26:56,000 --> 00:27:02,000

It is to commemorate the heralding and prosperity that the bull weevil brought to our city.

348

00:27:02,000 --> 00:27:04,000

It means a lot to our city.

349

00:27:04,000 --> 00:27:07,000

And I think it means a lot to the world.

350

00:27:08,000 --> 00:27:14,000

The bull weevil monument is a tangible reminder of one of the worst blights in U.S. history.

351

00:27:14,000 --> 00:27:18,000

But one that eventually led to even greater prosperity.

352

00:27:22,000 --> 00:27:29,000

Located on the southern shore of Lake Erie and named after the general who founded the city in 1796,

353

00:27:29,000 --> 00:27:34,000

Cleveland, Ohio now serves the nation as a vital transportation hub.

354

00:27:37,000 --> 00:27:42,000

But away from the hustle and bustle, on the tranquil grounds of Lake View Cemetery

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00:27:42,000 --> 00:27:45,000

stands an imposing stone monument.

356

00:27:46,000 --> 00:27:50,000

It's an ornate sandstone structure that stands 180 feet tall

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00:27:50,000 --> 00:27:54,000

and is decorated with these incredible murals.

358

00:27:55,000 --> 00:27:58,000

And the interior is equally grand.

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00:27:58,000 --> 00:28:02,000

Intricate stained glass windows, mosaic tiles,

360

00:28:02,000 --> 00:28:10,000

and on the main floor, a larger-than-life marble statue commemorating the 20th president of the United States.

361

00:28:11,000 --> 00:28:14,000

This is the James A. Garfield Monument,

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00:28:14,000 --> 00:28:20,000

one of the biggest and most elaborate mausoleums of any American president,

363

00:28:20,000 --> 00:28:23,000

as author Candice Millard can attest.

364

00:28:23,000 --> 00:28:29,000

It honors the venerable Ohioan, whose term in office was cut grievously short.

365

00:28:29,000 --> 00:28:34,000

This monument is a testament to one of the greatest tragedies in American history.

366

00:28:35,000 --> 00:28:39,000

So what caused Garfield's presidency to end so abruptly?

367

00:28:40,000 --> 00:28:45,000

And how did this event spark the development of a technology that's still in use today?

368

00:28:48,000 --> 00:28:51,000

1881, Washington, D.C.

369

00:28:52,000 --> 00:28:58,000

Republican James A. Garfield is inaugurated as president of the United States.

370

00:28:58,000 --> 00:29:01,000

A Civil War hero turned congressman.

371

00:29:01,000 --> 00:29:06,000

Garfield promises to pursue full civil rights for the nation's newly freed slaves.

372

00:29:07,000 --> 00:29:11,000

But on July 2nd, a mere four months into his term,

373

00:29:11,000 --> 00:29:16,000

the 49-year-old president is entering the Potomac and Baltimore train station

374

00:29:16,000 --> 00:29:22,000

when a volley of gunshots rings out, and the president is hit twice.

375

00:29:22,000 --> 00:29:26,000

First reaction was shock, and he said,

376

00:29:26,000 --> 00:29:28,000

my God, what is this?

377

00:29:29,000 --> 00:29:34,000

In the midst of the chaos, a train station policeman apprehends the shooter.

378

00:29:34,000 --> 00:29:39,000

A delusional man named Charles Guiteau, who, it is later learned,

379

00:29:39,000 --> 00:29:42,000

believed that God wanted him to kill the president.

380

00:29:43,000 --> 00:29:48,000

Garfield is rushed to the White House, where a team of the country's finest doctors

381

00:29:48,000 --> 00:29:50,000

gather to examine the wounded leader.

382

00:29:51,000 --> 00:29:56,000

While the first bullet only grazed Garfield's arm, the second, which entered his back,

383

00:29:57,000 --> 00:29:59,000

is unaccounted for.

384

00:29:59,000 --> 00:30:05,000

They think because the bullet went in his right side that it probably hit his liver,

385

00:30:05,000 --> 00:30:08,000

and they think that he probably won't survive the night.

386

00:30:09,000 --> 00:30:13,000

The doctors conclude that the only way to save the president's life

387

00:30:13,000 --> 00:30:16,000

is to locate and remove the deadly slug.

388

00:30:17,000 --> 00:30:22,000

And they desperately search the president's abdomen in a manner that is far from gentle.

389

00:30:23,000 --> 00:30:26,000

At one point, a probe gets caught in the ribs,

390

00:30:26,000 --> 00:30:31,000

and the surgeon has to kind of tug on it until he finally gets it loose.

391

00:30:32,000 --> 00:30:36,000

The president does survive the night, but over the following weeks,

392

00:30:36,000 --> 00:30:42,000

as doctors continue to search for the bullet, his condition rapidly deteriorates.

393

00:30:42,000 --> 00:30:45,000

President Garfield is too ill even to sit up.

394

00:30:46,000 --> 00:30:49,000

But just as his physicians are starting to lose hope,

395

00:30:49,000 --> 00:30:55,000

a wealthy inventor approaches the White House with something he claims can save the president's life.

396

00:30:56,000 --> 00:30:57,000

His name?

397

00:30:58,000 --> 00:31:00,000

Alexander Graham Bell.

398

00:31:02,000 --> 00:31:07,000

The inventor of the telephone has a new device called an induction balance.

399

00:31:07,000 --> 00:31:11,000

Bell designed this apparatus to reduce static on telephone lines,

400

00:31:11,000 --> 00:31:14,000

and it works by emitting an electric current

401

00:31:14,000 --> 00:31:19,000

that makes a distinct buzzing sound when it comes into close contact with metal.

402

00:31:20,000 --> 00:31:27,000

But now Bell realizes that his induction balance can serve a far different and critical purpose.

403

00:31:27,000 --> 00:31:35,000

It is a sort of metal detector, and he thinks I can use this to detect where the bullet is lodged and the president.

404

00:31:36,000 --> 00:31:40,000

Can Bell's device locate the slug and help save the president?

405

00:31:45,000 --> 00:31:49,000

A month after being shot by a deranged gunman,

406

00:31:50,000 --> 00:31:53,000

President James Garfield is in critical condition.

407

00:31:53,000 --> 00:31:58,000

Doctors have been unable to find the bullet lodged somewhere in his body.

408

00:31:58,000 --> 00:32:00,000

But help is at hand.

409

00:32:00,000 --> 00:32:04,000

Inventor Alexander Graham Bell has created a primitive metal detector

410

00:32:04,000 --> 00:32:08,000

that could locate the slug and save the president's life.

411

00:32:09,000 --> 00:32:10,000

But will it work?

412

00:32:14,000 --> 00:32:16,000

August 1st, 1881.

413

00:32:17,000 --> 00:32:23,000

Alexander Graham Bell arrives at the president's bedside, his new invention in hand.

414

00:32:25,000 --> 00:32:29,000

Bell slowly moves the metal detector over Garfield's body,

415

00:32:29,000 --> 00:32:34,000

but rather than emitting a strong buzzing sound that would indicate the presence of a bullet,

416

00:32:34,000 --> 00:32:38,000

all Bell hears is a faint pulsating noise.

417

00:32:39,000 --> 00:32:45,000

Desperately he tries again and moves the metal detector several times over the ailing president's frame.

418

00:32:45,000 --> 00:32:48,000

But the result is the same.

419

00:32:49,000 --> 00:32:56,000

Bell's device has failed, and the esteemed inventor leaves the White House confused and despondent.

420

00:32:57,000 --> 00:33:02,000

And then, on September 19th, the 49-year-old president dies.

421

00:33:03,000 --> 00:33:09,000

But when pathologists perform an autopsy on Garfield and finally locate the slug,

422

00:33:09,000 --> 00:33:14,000

they learn that it was not the assassin's bullet that killed the president after all.

423

00:33:14,000 --> 00:33:18,000

This bullet didn't hit any vital organs, it didn't hit his spinal cord,

424

00:33:18,000 --> 00:33:23,000

it went behind his pancreas, where it had done all the harm it was going to do.

425

00:33:24,000 --> 00:33:28,000

So if the bullet didn't kill the president, what did?

426

00:33:29,000 --> 00:33:35,000

The answer lies with the very men who had tried so valiantly to save Garfield's life.

427

00:33:35,000 --> 00:33:42,000

Unfortunately, the medical community at the time did not fully understand the connection between germs and disease.

428

00:33:43,000 --> 00:33:49,000

The president's own doctors probe for this bullet with unsterilized fingers and instruments day after day,

429

00:33:49,000 --> 00:33:55,000

every time introducing more bacteria and adding to this growing infection in the president's body.

430

00:33:56,000 --> 00:34:02,000

Ultimately, it was the infection caused by the doctors looking for the bullet that killed President Garfield.

431

00:34:04,000 --> 00:34:06,000

But Garfield's story doesn't end there.

432

00:34:07,000 --> 00:34:14,000

In the wake of Garfield's death, Alexander Graham Bell remains determined to answer why his induction balance

433

00:34:14,000 --> 00:34:17,000

failed to detect the bullet when put to the test.

434

00:34:18,000 --> 00:34:21,000

And he finally comes up with a compelling reason.

435

00:34:22,000 --> 00:34:26,000

Garfield was lying on something that was very unusual at that time, which was a mattress with metal coils.

436

00:34:26,000 --> 00:34:31,000

And obviously, metal coils are going to affect something that's basically a metal detector.

437

00:34:32,000 --> 00:34:37,000

While Bell's device was not sophisticated enough to cope with such interference,

438

00:34:37,000 --> 00:34:42,000

his induction balance is one of the earliest recorded uses of a metal detector.

439

00:34:43,000 --> 00:34:47,000

Today, metal detectors are used in security systems worldwide.

440

00:34:48,000 --> 00:34:58,000

And at Cleveland Ohio's Lakeview Cemetery, the James A. Garfield Monument stands as a memorial to a president's tragic death

441

00:34:58,000 --> 00:35:02,000

and an invention that is still with us today.

442

00:35:09,000 --> 00:35:13,000

Founded more than 400 years ago in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains,

443

00:35:14,000 --> 00:35:18,000

Santa Fe, New Mexico is the nation's oldest capital city.

444

00:35:18,000 --> 00:35:23,000

And amidst the earthen clay structures is a truly exceptional building.

445

00:35:25,000 --> 00:35:31,000

Completed in 1878, the Loretto Chapel is a stunning architectural landmark.

446

00:35:33,000 --> 00:35:36,000

But according to curator and historian Richard Lindsley,

447

00:35:36,000 --> 00:35:41,000

the star attraction of this monument is not stained glass or ornate stonework.

448

00:35:43,000 --> 00:35:45,000

But a spiral staircase.

449

00:35:46,000 --> 00:35:49,000

There are 33 steps to the top and it's 20 feet tall.

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00:35:49,000 --> 00:35:52,000

When you see it, you are totally amazed.

451

00:35:54,000 --> 00:36:02,000

In fact, the enigmatic origins of this staircase have perplexed scientists and historians for more than a century.

452

00:36:02,000 --> 00:36:06,000

People from every walk of life come to visit us to look at our staircase.

453

00:36:06,000 --> 00:36:10,000

And they're all fascinated by its beauty and its mystery.

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00:36:11,000 --> 00:36:17,000

So what is the strange tale of the Loretto Chapel's miraculous stairway?

455

00:36:20,000 --> 00:36:26,000

1872. Santa Fe, New Mexico is an isolated frontier settlement.

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00:36:29,000 --> 00:36:33,000

Among the pioneers and prospectors brought here by the promise of the gold rush

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00:36:33,000 --> 00:36:37,000

is a group of Catholic nuns called the Loretto Sisters.

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00:36:38,000 --> 00:36:43,000

The focus of their work is a majestic chapel that is rising on the rough landscape.

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00:36:45,000 --> 00:36:52,000

But when the chapel's architect dies in 1879, he leaves a critical part of the sanctuary missing.

460

00:36:54,000 --> 00:36:57,000

There are no stairs leading to the choir balcony.

461

00:36:58,000 --> 00:37:02,000

And when they realized that installing a traditional diagonal staircase

462

00:37:02,000 --> 00:37:06,000

would leave almost no room to seat the congregation.

463

00:37:07,000 --> 00:37:11,000

The sisters reach out to members of the community for assistance.

464

00:37:11,000 --> 00:37:15,000

The sisters ask the local carpenters to build a staircase and they fail.

465

00:37:15,000 --> 00:37:17,000

They just didn't have the skill or ability to do it.

466

00:37:17,000 --> 00:37:20,000

That's when the sisters decide to turn to prayer.

467

00:37:21,000 --> 00:37:25,000

It's said the Loretto Sisters prayed for eight days straight.

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00:37:27,000 --> 00:37:31,000

And then on the ninth day, just as they are starting to lose hope

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00:37:31,000 --> 00:37:35,000

a shabby bearded stranger appears on the horizon.

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00:37:35,000 --> 00:37:40,000

This strange man rode off the desert by himself on a donkey and offered to build the staircase.

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00:37:41,000 --> 00:37:48,000

The man assures the holy women that he can solve their architectural problem, but on one condition.

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00:37:48,000 --> 00:37:53,000

He insisted upon working inside the chapel with the doors locked by himself.

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00:37:55,000 --> 00:38:03,000

The man works alone in this way for several months until the sisters can bear the anticipation no longer.

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00:38:03,000 --> 00:38:10,000

Finally, one morning the sisters went in and to their amazement, he was gone.

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00:38:12,000 --> 00:38:21,000

Before them is a twisting spiral staircase that makes two 360 degree turns within a height of only 20 feet.

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00:38:21,000 --> 00:38:23,000

It must have been quite a sight for them.

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00:38:23,000 --> 00:38:26,000

The man has achieved what it seemed impossible.

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00:38:26,000 --> 00:38:33,000

His beautiful curving staircase provides a passage into the loft while occupying hardly any space.

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00:38:33,000 --> 00:38:42,000

But even more astoundingly, the structure stands with no visible nails, screws or means of central support.

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00:38:42,000 --> 00:38:44,000

There's no pole down the center to hold it up.

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00:38:44,000 --> 00:38:48,000

They're totally amazed that the staircase stands as it does.

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00:38:49,000 --> 00:38:56,000

When the sisters try to track the carpenter down to thank him, they discover he's nowhere to be found.

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00:38:56,000 --> 00:39:00,000

No one saw him leave. They never got to pay him for his work.

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00:39:01,000 --> 00:39:08,000

So who was the mysterious man who built the seemingly miraculous staircase?

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00:39:12,000 --> 00:39:15,000

In the Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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00:39:16,000 --> 00:39:23,000

A mysterious stranger has single-handedly constructed a seemingly impossible spiral staircase.

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00:39:23,000 --> 00:39:28,000

But before the nuns can thank him for his work, he vanishes.

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00:39:28,000 --> 00:39:34,000

So who was this man and how did he create such a wondrous masterpiece?

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00:39:36,000 --> 00:39:41,000

Despite their efforts, the sisters never locate the mysterious carpenter.

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00:39:42,000 --> 00:39:47,000

Eventually, they declare the incident to be a case of divine intervention.

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00:39:47,000 --> 00:39:52,000

The sisters came to the conclusion that he had come from heaven to build the staircase for them.

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00:39:53,000 --> 00:40:02,000

While many doubt this explanation, the story of the craftsman and his wondrous staircase remains shrouded in mystery for over 100 years.

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00:40:03,000 --> 00:40:14,000

Finally, in the late 1990s, a local historian named Mary Jean Straw Cook makes a discovery that could reveal the identity of the carpenter.

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00:40:14,000 --> 00:40:19,000

She had been investigating the builder of the staircase for almost 20 years.

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00:40:19,000 --> 00:40:28,000

Combing through Santa Fe newspapers from 1895, Cook stumbles across the obituary of a man named Francois Rochard,

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00:40:28,000 --> 00:40:32,000

who claims that he was the builder of the staircase.

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00:40:34,000 --> 00:40:40,000

Cook learns that Rochard was linked to a secretive guild of French craftsmen called Les Compagnons.

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00:40:41,000 --> 00:40:48,000

To gain entry into this enigmatic brotherhood, a carpenter had not only to complete a masterpiece in wood,

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00:40:48,000 --> 00:40:51,000

but was forbidden from taking credit for the work.

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00:40:52,000 --> 00:40:55,000

So was Rochard the mysterious stair builder?

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00:40:56,000 --> 00:41:00,000

The evidence is compelling, but we may never know for sure.

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00:41:00,000 --> 00:41:05,000

And to this day, there is no conclusive proof as to who this man was.

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00:41:07,000 --> 00:41:11,000

And that's not the only enigma that surrounds the staircase.

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00:41:12,000 --> 00:41:17,000

Exactly how it was built is something that has also confounded experts.

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00:41:18,000 --> 00:41:22,000

The sisters would have entire graduating classes of students stand on it,

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00:41:22,000 --> 00:41:26,000

and architects and engineers are amazed the staircase never collapsed under all that weight.

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00:41:28,000 --> 00:41:36,000

Over the years, scientists examining the structure have concluded that its secret lies in a series of tightly bound wooden beams

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00:41:36,000 --> 00:41:40,000

called stringers that run along the sides of the stairs.

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00:41:40,000 --> 00:41:46,000

The interior stringer makes such tight inward turns that it actually functions like a pole.

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00:41:47,000 --> 00:41:50,000

Providing a surprisingly strong support.

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00:41:53,000 --> 00:42:01,000

However it was built, and whoever built it, the staircase continues to astound churchgoers and experts alike.

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00:42:03,000 --> 00:42:11,000

And today, visitors to the Loretto Chapel can marvel at the craftsmanship of every step of this miraculous stairway.

513

00:42:12,000 --> 00:42:23,000

From a creepy killer to a rock and roll rebel, an ill-fated president to a spiritual stairway.

514

00:42:24,000 --> 00:42:28,000

I'm Don Wildman, and these are Monumental Mysteries.