

EMILY'S BRIDGE

for The Midnight Society



presented by

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INTRODUCTION

Being in the market of writing dark fiction, it follows that much of my time is spent mired in the shadowy stuff. What you have in front of you is the results of my efforts researching, documenting, and dallying in everything from the arcane to the supernatural.

I've been writing fiction for several years, and have acted as a contributor for a number of online publications in the same timespan. Where possible, articles have been researched and referenced with citations.

You're holding a sampling of the the fun stuff that fuels my practice that other institutions, organizations, communities, and blogs were kind enough to publish.

If you'd like to work with me, make a suggestion for future articles, or alert me that the world is ending and I ought to backup my hard drive, feel free to send a note.

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EMILY'S BRIDGE

for The Midnight Society

It's sometime after ten and we're standing in front of Old Yard holding an eighteenth century lantern replica with a tin roof, holds slotted into it to let the heat escape. We're dangling it over the wall that separates the parking lot from the cemetery. The candlelight reflects off a small slabbed tombstone — isolated from the rest of the graves without any real indication why. It could be a dissenter's plot. I run over the number of reasons why someone might be buried as a dissenter in 19th century Stowe: usual reasons include not adhering to the popular religion of the day, but in some cases, convicts or suicides got special treatment.

A glance over our shoulders confirms that the small, clapboard church would cast a shadow on the spot we're standing if it were daytime; but it's dark and there's a clear, full moon overhead, and I'm thinking to myself that — if I were angling for it — this is the best scenario to go ghost hunting.

There are 1,150 burials here dating from the town's founding in 1763, though the cemetery was closed to new burials in 1915. It's a nice chunk of history documenting drownings, deaths, soldiers and heroes, and of course — the one, lonesome tombstone that bears the name of our haunting of interest for the evening:

Emily.

The grave allegedly belongs to a girl who died in Stowe, Vermont, sometime in the mid-1800's. Her name was Emily. What we're trying to puzzle out is why her grave sits so far from the rest, and that's when our guide mentions "The Bridge."

Skip ahead an hour: We've been walking around old Stowe for the better part of the night,



and we've gotten a solid dose of legends, history about the town's former mortuary, and the story of a ghost that tap dances on the roof of the Green Mountain Inn as the tour concludes, and my partner and crime and I are walking back to the car when we pause, and he says to me, "It's a nice night, don't you think? Nice night to visit that bridge [the guide] mentioned."

The guide also said that past eleven in Stowe's Hollow, over Gold Brooke Road where this hundred and seventy-two-year-old Howe Truss construction sits, you're not to stop, not to get out of your car to snap photos to see if you can catch some orbs on film, and definitely not to hang around between midnight and three a.m. when the most paranormal activity at the site has been reported. I look at the clock on my phone (it's eleven.) We check Google Maps to see how far away this thing is (six minutes) and then we jump in the car.

EMILY'S BRIDGE, VERMONT

Like most folklore, the story branches into several possible unfortunate conclusions for the protagonist, who grew up in the town of Stowe sometime in the 1800's, presumably after the bridge was constructed in 1844. We know that her name was Emily, and we know that she had a lover from a well-to-do family.

Emily herself was rather poor, and that meant she was an unfavourable match for their eligible well-to-do son, according to the young man's parents.

Simply put, they would not let the romance bloom.

Emily and her lover conspired to elope: they would meet on the bridge at Gold Brooke Road at midnight, and they would escape the town and his parents.

In one version of the story, Emily arrived at the bridge, but detained by his parents, her lover never came. In a fit of despair, believing he had forsaken her, she hung herself from the rafters.

In another, Emily was met at the bridge at midnight — but not by her beloved. His mother found her in the darkness, and following an argument, murdered the girl to keep Emily from seducing her son.

In my favourite version of the story, Emily was rejected by her lover before reaching the bridge, and mad with grief, she drove her carriage and horses down the narrow, winding,



tree-lined road that led to Gold Brooke Bridge and lost control: she crashed into the rocks below the bridge, and died in pain and despair.

Several supernatural manifestations have been documented over the years about the bridge, including cold spots, phantom music, hand prints left on car windows with no traceable origins, smudges and orbs in photographs, and sensations such as scratching on passersby. Others have claimed to have seen the entity, who jiggled the handles on their car doors after they'd locked the locks while on the bridge.

THE LORE BEHIND EMILY'S BRIDGE

Back home in the comfort of urban Montreal, partner-in-crime in bed beside me gleefully researching the details of Emily's story, and I, beside him, squinting at the pitch black and completely obscured photos we took on the bridge at night (the reason you're seeing the shots I snapped the next day when we went back), we discover the groan-worthy inevitable:

The Emily's Bridge story is a hoax.

Cooked up in the early 1970's for a school newspaper, the author of the story claimed she went out to the bridge with a ouija board in the middle of the night and had an encounter, thus transcribing the story told by the ghost. Thus manufactured, the legend began. *Obscure Vermont* does an excellent job summarizing the various paranormal accounts experienced on the bridge over time, and even suggests that the location -- while there are no accounts of a murder on the bridge -- may have inherited a haunting from a bridge nearby that burned down in the 1940s.

If you're still curious, there's also a website dedicated to Emily's Bridge, which is about as official as you can get for a haunted-but-maybe-not-haunted covered bridge in Vermont.

FINAL WORDS

Haunted or not, what I can say about the area is that it's beautiful: the road that leads up to Gold Brooke Bridge winds and dips and curves, flanked on either side by tall trees that, in the fall sunlight, are a lovely glowing gold and red (that is also spooky as hell to drive through late at night.) In the darkness, the bridge sits black and silent as your car headlights illuminate its hollow, colourless interior, and straining to see the rafters through the sky-



light carries the weight of unseen possibility. It's easy to imagine that you hear the sounds of Emily's toes dragging over the roof of your car as you pass beneath the rafters where her body hung.

You hold your breath, and can't help but look into the rearview as you drive away, worried but unconvinced that you might see Emily waiting behind you, lingering on the bridge in that perpetual night.

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ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

The Midnight Society

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<http://midnightsocietytales.com/2016/10/22/folklore-week-emilys-bridge-vermont/>



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kira Butler writes speculative fiction for adults, new adults, and young adult readers. She especially appreciates dark urban fantasy and low key horror, and likes to write about everything in between. She lives in Montreal, where she is working towards the completion of her first young adult horror novel.



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