

# Renegade Files®

**Episode Title:** Appalachian Witchcraft, Spooky Stories, and Old Mountain Legends - RF116

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## **Podcast App Description:**

Ancient mountains hold deep folklore. Explore Appalachian witchcraft, haunted hollows, cryptids, and mountain legends whispered across generations.


## **Instagram Post:**


  **Appalachian Witchcraft, Spooky Stories, and Old Mountain Legends**  

Deep in the ancient Appalachian Mountains, generations have whispered stories of mountain magic, haunted hollows, strange lights in the woods, and creatures that move through the forests after dark.

From old granny witchcraft and protective charms... to ghost soldiers, the Wampus Cat, and eerie encounters deep in the hills, these legends have traveled through the mountains for centuries.

Are they just folklore... or something more?

 Listen to **Renegade Files Episode 116** now and explore the mysteries of Appalachia.

 Link in bio

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## **Show Notes**

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This is Renegade Files Episode 116, Appalachian Witchcraft, Spooky Stories, and Old Mountain Legends.

This week we turn our attention to the ancient mountains of the American East.

The Appalachian mountains are older than the Rockies and older than the Alps. Their peaks have been worn down by time, leaving a landscape of long ridges, mist filled valleys, deep forests, and winding hollows where generations of people have built their lives.

For centuries, communities across Appalachia lived in relative isolation from the outside world, in narrow valleys and on quiet mountain ridges where roads were few and the forests were thick. In places like these, traditions linger, stories travel through memories, and knowledge passes from one generation to the next through conversation, old tales, and lived experience.

Out of this environment grew one of the richest bodies of folklore in North America.

Old world folk traditions arrived with settlers from Scotland, Ireland, and England, and met ancient beliefs of the Native American cultures there. The result was a culture where folk magic, spiritual belief, ghost stories, monsters, and everyday life overlapped.

On this episode we explore the origins of Appalachian folk magic, the haunted places scattered through the hills, and the strange legends that have grown from one of the oldest mountain landscapes on Earth.

So come sit with me on the front porch, grab a glass of something to warm you against the fog, and Settle in.

We begin in the mountains themselves, and the traditions carried there by the people who came to settle among the blue ridges and misty hollows.

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What Is Appalachian Witchcraft; What Is Granny Magic In Appalachia; What Is The Wampus Cat Legend; What Is The Demon Leaper Cryptid; What Is The Not Deer Appalachian Legend; Are There Bigfoot Sightings In The Appalachian Mountains; What Are Haunted Hollows In Appalachia; What Is The Ghost Soldier Of Lewisburg; Why Do People Warn Not To Answer Voices In The Woods; Renegade Files Appalachian Witchcraft Episode;

**AEO (Answer Engine Optimization)**

**Question 1:** “What is Appalachian witchcraft or granny magic?”

**Answer 1:** Appalachian witchcraft, often called granny magic or mountain magic, refers to traditional folk healing and protective practices passed through families in the Appalachian region. These practices typically involve herbal remedies, spoken prayers, protective charms, and household rituals intended to guard against illness, misfortune, or spiritual harm.

**Question 2:** “What is Appalachian folk magic and where did it come from?”

**Answer 2:** Appalachian folk magic developed from a blend of European folk traditions brought by settlers from Scotland, Ireland, England, and Germany, combined with Indigenous knowledge of local plants and spiritual ideas connected to the land. Over generations these influences merged into regional healing and protective traditions practiced quietly within mountain communities.

**Question 3:** “What is the Wampus Cat legend?”

**Answer 3:** The Wampus Cat is a legendary creature from Appalachian folklore often described as a large feline with glowing eyes that moves silently through mountain forests. Some Cherokee traditions tell of a woman transformed into the creature after secretly watching sacred rituals, turning the story into both a warning and a supernatural legend.

**Question 4:** “What is the Demon Leaper cryptid?”

**Answer 4:** The Demon Leaper is a modern Appalachian cryptid legend describing a tall humanoid creature with unusually long limbs that reportedly moves by making powerful leaps across large distances. Witnesses have claimed sightings near wooded areas, rural roads, and remote countryside in parts of Kentucky and neighboring regions.

**Question 5:** “What is the Not Deer in Appalachian folklore?”

**Answer 5:** The Not Deer is a modern Appalachian legend describing an animal that

resembles a deer but behaves in unnatural ways. Witnesses say the creature may move awkwardly, have distorted body proportions, or stare directly at humans without fear, creating the unsettling impression that something about it is not quite natural.

**Question 6:** “What is the Ghost Soldier of Lewisburg story?”

**Answer 6:** The Ghost Soldier of Lewisburg is a story from West Virginia in which witnesses during Civil War reenactments reported seeing a soldier who did not belong to the event. The figure reportedly walked across the battlefield in period uniform and vanished when approached, leading some to believe it may have been the spirit of a soldier who died in the area.

**Question 7:** “Why does Appalachia have so many paranormal legends?”

**Answer 7:** Appalachia’s deep forests, rugged terrain, and historically isolated communities helped preserve storytelling traditions over many generations. European folk beliefs, Native American spiritual traditions, and centuries of local history combined to create a rich body of folklore involving ghost stories, mysterious creatures, and unexplained events.

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## **Episode Text**

Hello my weird friend. You have tuned into Renegade Files, your underground podcast for paranormal events, unsolved mysteries, and deep folklore analysis. I’m your host, Lex Gordon, coming to you from the Jungle Villa Outpost, Deep in the Uncharted Tropics.

This is Renegade Files Episode 116, Appalachian Witchcraft, Spooky Stories, and Old Mountain Legends.

This week we turn our attention to the ancient mountains of the American East.

The Appalachian mountains are older than the both the Rockies and the Alps. Their peaks have been worn down by time, leaving a landscape of long ridges, mist filled valleys, deep forests, and winding hollows where generations of people have built their lives.

For centuries, communities across Appalachia lived in relative isolation from the outside world, on creek banks and quiet mountainsides, where roads were few and timber thick. In places like these, traditions linger, stories travel through memories, and knowledge passes from one generation to the next through conversation, old tales, and lived experience.

Out of this environment grew one of the richest bodies of folklore in North America.

Old world pagan traditions arrived with settlers from Scotland, Ireland, and England, and met ancient beliefs of the Native American cultures there. The result was a place where folk magic, spiritual belief, ghost stories, monsters, and everyday life overlapped.

On this episode we explore the origins of Appalachian folk magic, the haunted places scattered through the hills, and the strange legends that have grown from one of the oldest mountain landscapes on Earth.

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## **PART 1 — The Origins of Appalachian Folk Magic**

The Appalachian Mountains stretch across the eastern spine of North America, beginning in the deep south near Alabama and continuing north through the United States and Canada, eventually reaching Newfoundland. Long before modern borders existed, these mountains were already ancient. Geologists estimate their origins reaching back hundreds of millions of years, formed during the collision of prehistoric continents. Time has worn their peaks down, leaving a vast landscape of rounded ridges, shadowed valleys, and dense forests that seem to roll endlessly across the horizon.

The terrain is rugged and complicated. Deep hollows twist between ridges. Fog settles in the valleys and lingers long after sunrise. Thick forests cover much of the land, and in many places the terrain makes travel slow even today. For the early inhabitants of the region, the mountains created natural pockets of isolation where communities formed and remained separated from the outside world for long stretches of time.

That isolation played a powerful role in shaping the culture of Appalachia. Traditions that arrived with settlers often stayed intact for generations. Stories were passed through families, spoken around fireplaces and kitchen tables. Customs were preserved not through books or institutions, but through memory and repetition.

European settlers began moving into the Appalachian region in large numbers during the eighteenth century. Many of them came from the borderlands of Scotland and England, from the highlands of Scotland, and from Ireland. German immigrants also moved into the region, bringing their own folk traditions and knowledge of herbal medicine.

These settlers did not arrive as blank slates. They carried with them centuries of rural European traditions that blended religion, practical medicine, and folk belief. In parts of Britain and Ireland there existed a long tradition of people sometimes called cunning folk. These were individuals within rural communities who were known for healing knowledge, protective charms, and remedies for illness or misfortune. Their practices often included the use of herbs, spoken prayers, protective symbols, and rituals meant to ward off harm.

When these settlers moved into the Appalachian frontier, those traditions traveled with them.

In many mountain communities there were individuals known for healing abilities or special knowledge. These might be elderly women who understood herbal remedies, or respected figures who could say certain prayers meant to stop bleeding or relieve sickness. Over time this body of knowledge came to be called by various names such as granny magic or mountain magic.

Much of it revolved around practical matters. Illness was common in frontier life, and professional doctors were often far away. People relied on knowledge of plants growing in the forests and fields around them. Roots, leaves, and bark were gathered and prepared into teas, poultices, and tonics. Certain plants were believed to calm fever, others to soothe wounds or stomach ailments.

Herbs, minerals, and other items also had their places in protective traditions meant to guard homes and families from harm. Iron was often believed to possess protective properties. Some families placed iron objects near doors or windows. Witch bottles were sometimes buried near the home. These bottles might contain nails, pins, or other small items intended to trap harmful forces.

Protective symbols were occasionally carved into wood around door frames or beams of houses and barns. Some of these symbols had origins in European folk traditions and were meant to guard against misfortune, illness, or wandering spirits.

Divination also appeared in various forms. Certain individuals claimed the ability to find lost items, predict events, or interpret signs and dreams. These practices were not always seen as mysterious or forbidden. In many communities they were simply part of the inherited knowledge of the mountains.

For the people practicing these traditions, the word witchcraft was not usually applied to their work. In most cases it was described simply as the old ways. It was knowledge handed down from parents and grandparents, something practical and familiar rather than exotic.

While European traditions formed one foundation of Appalachian folk magic, they were not the only influence shaping the region's spiritual landscape.

Long before European settlers arrived, Indigenous peoples had lived throughout the Appalachian region for thousands of years. Among the tribes connected to this land were the Cherokee, the Shawnee, and the Creek, along with many others whose histories reach deep into the past of the mountains.

These cultures possessed complex spiritual traditions closely tied to the natural world. Mountains, rivers, and forests were often understood as living environments filled with presence and meaning. Stories spoke of spirits within the land and animals that carried symbolic or spiritual significance. Dreams and visions were sometimes treated as forms of guidance or communication. Knowledge of plants and herbal medicine was also highly developed among Indigenous communities. Many plants used in healing traditions had long histories of use before European settlers arrived in the region.

As settlers and Native communities encountered one another, knowledge inevitably moved between cultures. Some settlers learned about new medicinal plants. Others absorbed ideas about the spiritual significance of certain places in the landscape.

Over generations these influences blended. European folk healing and protective charms gradually mingled with local knowledge of the land and its plants. The result was a regional tradition that developed its own character within the Appalachian Mountains.

Today many researchers refer to this blended tradition as Appalachian folk magic or Appalachian conjure. It represents a mixture of inherited European practices and knowledge shaped by the landscape and the cultural encounters that took place in the mountains.

The environment itself reinforced these traditions. Appalachian communities were often located far from large towns or centers of authority. Roads were few, travel was slow, and many families lived in small settlements tucked deep within valleys or along narrow mountain ridges.

In such places knowledge moved slowly and carefully. Trust within communities mattered. Skills and traditions were often shared quietly among relatives or close neighbors rather than openly taught to outsiders.

A culture of discretion developed around certain practices. Individuals known for healing abilities or special knowledge did not always advertise their skills widely. In part this caution came from religious pressures that viewed certain folk traditions with suspicion. In other cases people simply preferred to keep family knowledge private.

Stories circulated of individuals who could cure illness with spoken prayers, or who knew certain rituals to protect livestock or crops. Yet those who possessed such knowledge often shared it only with selected members of the next generation.

An elder might pass specific prayers, remedies, or rituals to a younger relative considered trustworthy enough to carry the knowledge forward. In some cases a person might choose one apprentice or successor to receive the full body of family traditions.

Because of this quiet method of transmission, some practices survived with relatively little change across long stretches of time. Knowledge that might have faded in more connected societies sometimes remained intact within the secluded valleys of the Appalachian Mountains.

So let's travel back to those early times in our mind to catch a glimpse of how such Folk Magic might have really looked.

*In many Appalachian communities there were women known quietly for certain kinds of knowledge. They were not called witches in their own circles. Most people simply called them a granny, a healer, or sometimes a conjure woman, and less often it could have been a man just the same.*

*Their work usually centered on practical protection. Protect the home. Protect the children. Keep sickness away. Keep restless spirits from crossing the threshold. Remove a curses placed by an enemy. These things were very real.*

*So Imagine a small cabin newly built along a mountain hollow sometime in the late nineteenth century. The timbers are still fresh and the chimney stones still smell faintly of the cold stream and damp clay mortar.*

*A young family has moved in, hopeful but cautious, because in those mountains a new house meant more than shelter. It meant staking a claim against whatever might already be wandering through the woods and valleys. Ghosts in those parts and times were not some imaginary spirit in a haunted house, but the real ancestors of those who lived on the land for ages, or the spirit of a cast out witch from a century ago who may have built a shack in this same valley, and who still seeks her forever solitude and peace.*

*On a cool evening just after sunset, the family awaits the arrival of an older woman invited from the community to come to the house. She walks the narrow path slowly with a lamp to light her way in one hand, and small cloth bundle in the other. Inside the bundle are a few simple objects gathered earlier in the day.*

*A small iron nail, blackened with age, a pinch of salt wrapped in paper, and three dried herbs taken from the mountainside. Rosemary, known in many traditions as a guardian plant. Sage gathered from a patch near the edge of a field, and a bit of dried cedar shaving taken from a fallen limb.*

*There is also a small glass jar.*

*And in her pack, a worn and curled Bible that has clearly been opened thousands of times before.*

*When she enters the home, she first asks the family to open every door and window. This is meant to allow anything lingering inside the house to leave before the protection is set. She thanks the old energies, but kindly asks them now to depart.*

*A sudden wind blows and mountain air moves through the rooms. Candles on the hearth flicker. The fire rekindled crackles... coals wrangle.*

*The old woman lights a small oil lamp and places it on the kitchen table. In the quiet light she opens the Bible and turns to the ninety first Psalm, a passage long used in protective prayers throughout many rural communities.*

*She reads slowly, not loudly, but with steady confidence.*

*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

*Her voice is calm, almost conversational, as if speaking both to the room and to something beyond it.*

*She closes the Bible and sets it beside the lamp.*

*From the cloth bundle she takes the small jar. Into the jar she places the iron nail. Then the salt. Then the herbs, each added with a quiet word of blessing.*

*Iron for strength.*

*Salt for purity.*

*Rosemary for remembrance and watchfulness.*

*Sage for cleansing.*

*Cedar for the strength of the mountain forests.*

*Once the jar is filled she holds it in both hands and speaks another prayer:*

*“We ask that this house be guarded, and that nothing ill-intentioned be allowed to cross its threshold.”*

*After the prayer she seals the jar with a tight lid.*

*Then she walks slowly through the house.*

*At the front door she pauses. She presses her hand gently against the doorframe and speaks another short verse from memory.*

*“The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”*

*She places the jar above the doorframe where it cannot easily be seen.*

*Next she moves to the back door and repeats the prayer.*

*At each window she touches the frame lightly and whispers a blessing meant to seal the openings against wandering spirits.*

*Then with a small knife, she marks the wood at the bottom of the doorway exactly where the door closes with a small protective symbol carved lightly into the wood. A cross, inside a circle.*

*This completes the protective spell on the house, and she returns to the table and lifts the lamp.*

*The final part of the work takes place outside.*

*She walks slowly around the cabin with the lamp in hand while the family follows behind. At the four corners of the house she sprinkles a small pinch of salt into the soil and says a brief prayer asking the land itself to guard those who live there.*

*By the time this is complete the night has settled fully into the hollow. The forest is quiet except for insects and the distant sound of water moving through the creek.*

*She returns to the front door and closes it gently.*

*The family thanks her, though she waves it off in the quiet way common to people used to such tasks.*

*Before leaving she offers a final piece of advice that many mountain families heard growing up.*

*“Keep kindness in your home. Keep your word. And if you ever hear something call your name from the woods after dark, best not answer it.”*

*With that she gathers her shawl and walks back down the narrow path into the trees, leaving the small jar hidden above the doorframe and the quiet protection of old mountain traditions settled over the house.*

Even today there are people in parts of Appalachia who speak of inherited prayers or remedies that have been passed through several generations. These traditions exist even in modern life, sometimes openly acknowledged and other times quietly maintained, like a family secret.

The mountains themselves seem to reinforce the feeling that old knowledge has a place here. The forests are thick and the valleys deep. Roads wind through terrain that can feel timeless, especially at night when mist settles along the ridges and the lights of distant towns fade behind the hills.

Within this environment stories travel easily. A strange event witnessed by one person may become a story repeated across a community. Over time those stories merge with older traditions and become part of the shared memory of the region.

Folk magic became one thread woven into the broader cultural fabric of Appalachia. It lived beside church traditions, local customs, and the daily routines of mountain life.

Yet it was not the only mysterious element carried through the hills and valleys of the region.

The Appalachian Mountains are also filled with stories of haunted battlefields, wandering spirits, and unexplained encounters on quiet back roads. And those stories lead us into the next chapter of the strange history surrounding these ancient mountains.

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## **PART 2 – Appalachian Ghost Stories and Haunted Locations**

The old traditions of Appalachian folk magic helped shape the way people in the mountains understood the unseen world around them. When generations grow up hearing prayers spoken for protection, charms buried beneath doorways, and stories of spirits moving quietly through the forests, the boundary between the ordinary and the mysterious becomes thin.

In communities scattered along winding ridges and narrow hollows, strange events often found their way into local memory. Stories traveled from porch to porch, carried by word of mouth. Over time many of those stories settled into the folklore of the region. Some involved restless spirits tied to the long history of conflict and hardship in the mountains. Others described unexplained lights moving through dark forests or figures appearing along empty roads late at night.

Among the most well-known stories told in Appalachia is the tale of the ghost soldier of Lewisburg, West Virginia.

Lewisburg sits in Greenbrier County, a place where the Civil War left deep scars. The region saw troop movements, skirmishes, and occupations during the conflict. The town itself hosted both Union and Confederate forces at different times, and many soldiers passed through the surrounding countryside.

In more recent years the town has hosted historical reenactments to commemorate the battles that once took place there. Participants dress in period uniforms and recreate scenes from the war for visitors and historians.

During several of these events, witnesses reported something unusual.

Amid the rows of reenactors and spectators, a soldier appeared who did not seem to belong to any of the participating units. He wore a uniform consistent with the Civil War era, but no one recognized him as part of the organized event.

Observers described him walking slowly across the battlefield with a quiet, distant expression. He did not interact with the other participants and seemed unaware of the reenactment itself.

At first people assumed he was simply another reenactor arriving late or moving between groups. But when a few participants approached to speak with him, the figure reportedly vanished.

Some witnesses said he faded gradually as though dissolving into the air. Others insisted that he disappeared instantly once someone drew near.

Searches of the area found no sign of anyone matching the description.

Stories like this are difficult to verify, yet the tale of the Lewisburg ghost soldier has circulated widely among those familiar with the region. For many people the story carries a simple explanation. The hills around Lewisburg witnessed real battles, and many soldiers died in those fields. Some believe the figure seen during the reenactments may represent one of those men still wandering the ground where his life ended.

Across Appalachia there are countless places known informally as haunted hollows. The term hollow refers to the narrow valleys carved between mountain ridges, places where small communities often formed along creeks or winding dirt roads.

These hollows can feel secluded even in modern times. Tall trees block much of the sky, and the steep ridges on either side create pockets of deep shadow once the sun sets.

It's in places like these that many of the region's ghost stories originate.

People have reported seeing lantern lights drifting slowly through forests where no houses stand. The lights move between the trees, sometimes rising and falling as if carried by an unseen traveler.

Others describe hearing voices echoing through the woods late at night. A person walking along a mountain road might hear their name spoken from somewhere beyond the tree line. When they stop to listen, the forest returns to silence.

In many mountain communities there is an old warning passed down through families about hearing your own name; we'll get deeper into that later so stay tuned.

Travelers along rural Appalachian roads have also reported encountering figures standing near the edge of the pavement late at night. Sometimes the figure appears briefly in the beam of headlights before vanishing when the vehicle slows or stops. Almost every city or town has a "Phantom Hill," or a "Ghost Curve."

Whether these stories arise from imagination, misidentified animals, or something stranger is difficult to determine. Yet the consistency of the tales across different communities has helped them become a lasting part of regional folklore.

Another story that deeply influenced Appalachian ghost lore comes from northern Tennessee.

The legend of the Bell Witch dates back to the early eighteenth century near the town of Adams, not far from the Kentucky border. At the time the area was still considered part of the broader Appalachian frontier.

The story centers on the Bell family, who began reporting strange disturbances around their home in the year 1817.

The events reportedly began with unusual sounds. Knocking on walls. Scratching noises that seemed to move through the house. Footsteps crossing the floor even when no one was there.

Soon the disturbances grew more intense.

Family members claimed they were slapped or struck by an unseen force. Bedcovers were pulled away during the night. Furniture shifted across rooms without explanation.

Neighbors who visited the home reported hearing voices speaking from empty spaces within the house. The voices sometimes answered questions and seemed to know details about the lives of those present.

The entity eventually identified itself with a name, claiming to be the spirit of a woman named Kate, and some traced that name back to that of a fearsome witch who had lived in the area in times of old. For years the Bell family lived with these strange events, which attracted visitors from across the region hoping to witness the phenomenon.

Even Andrew Jackson, who would later become President of the United States, was said to have heard about the case and visited the property out of curiosity.

The Bell Witch story became one of the most famous supernatural legends in American history. Whether the events had natural explanations, were exaggerated through storytelling, or involved something truly unexplained remains a matter of debate.

Regardless of the explanation, the legend spread quickly through nearby mountain communities and became woven into the larger tapestry of Appalachian ghost lore.

Beyond individual stories, there are many locations scattered throughout the mountains that locals describe as haunted.

Abandoned coal towns are among the most common settings. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries coal mining drew thousands of workers into remote Appalachian valleys. Entire towns grew up around the mines. When

the coal ran out or the companies closed operations, many of those towns were left behind.

Today some of those places remain little more than scattered foundations and empty buildings slowly being reclaimed by the forest.

Visitors sometimes report strange sensations when walking through these abandoned sites. Cold pockets of air move unexpectedly through still surroundings. Faint sounds echo through empty structures. Some claim to see shadowy figures standing in doorways or windows before vanishing when approached.

Civil War battlefields also carry a reputation for ghostly activity. Large portions of Appalachia saw troop movements during the war, and skirmishes occurred throughout the region. The mountains hold countless burial sites and forgotten encampments where soldiers once lived and died.

Late night visitors occasionally report hearing distant marching sounds or seeing figures dressed in period clothing standing among the trees.

Remote cemeteries scattered through the mountains add another layer to the region's ghost stories. Many of these graveyards sit on small hillsides near long abandoned homes.

Weathered headstones lean at odd angles, and tall grass often grows between the graves.

People passing these sites at night sometimes report seeing dim lights or shadowy shapes moving slowly among the stones.

When I was a kid vacationing in Bluefield West Virginia at my Aunt Daisy's cabin, my dad and my younger brother came upon an old graveyard of just such description near a homestead where only the stone chimney survived.

The cabin we went to a few times there, was only accessible by an old Willys Jeep, faded pale green, used to cross a creek and ramble up the rocky washed out road to reach the cabin that had no electricity and no running water. They just left the jeep on the flat shoal over the creek when leaving for the winter, right there with the keys in it, where it would sit, sometimes for a year or more. It was about a mile off the main road. And my dad and grandparents always said it was never messed with, and it would always start the first time whenever they came back to use it.

Different times.

Even isolated mountain cabins and forgotten logging roads have gathered reputations over the years. Hunters and hikers sometimes describe hearing footsteps behind them on quiet trails, only to turn and find no one there.

Strange lights drifting through the woods appear again and again in Appalachian accounts. Some glow faintly between trees. Others move slowly along ridgelines before disappearing into the darkness.

Stories like these continue to circulate through the region, told by residents who have spent their lives among the hills and forests of the Appalachian Mountains.

Yet ghosts and wandering spirits are only one part of the strange folklore associated with this ancient landscape.

Other stories describe creatures moving silently through the forests. Beings that do not fit easily into ordinary explanations.

And those legends lead us deeper into the darker corners of Appalachian folklore.

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### **PART 3 — Cryptids and Mountain Legends**

Beyond ghost stories and wandering spirits, Appalachian folklore also carries tales of strange creatures said to move through the forests and mountains. Some of these legends are old, passed down through generations of storytelling. Others are newer accounts that have spread more recently through word of mouth and modern media. Together they form a collection of mountain legends that continue to capture the imagination of people living in and around the Appalachian range.

One of the more unusual modern stories is the creature sometimes referred to as the Demon Leaper.

Reports of this figure have surfaced in parts of Kentucky and neighboring areas over the past several decades. Witnesses describe a tall humanoid shape seen near wooded roads or along the edges of remote countryside. The creature is

often said to have extremely long limbs and a thin, stretched appearance that looks unnatural when seen in motion.

The most distinctive part of the story is the way the creature moves.

Witnesses claim the figure is capable of covering large distances in sudden leaps. Some reports describe it moving from one hillside to another in a matter of seconds. Others claim to have seen it cross roads in a single bound before disappearing into the trees.

Most sightings occur late at night along rural mountain roads. Drivers report seeing a dark figure standing near the roadside or crouched near the edge of the forest. When the headlights approach, the figure suddenly springs away with a powerful leap that carries it far into the darkness.

As with many Appalachian legends, the stories are difficult to verify and often vary depending on who tells them. Yet the repeated descriptions of a tall figure moving through the woods with long, unnatural jumps have kept the story circulating in local folklore.

Another creature that appears frequently in Appalachian legend is the Wampus Cat.

The Wampus Cat is often described as a large feline creature moving silently through the forests of the southern mountains. Witnesses sometimes report glowing eyes reflecting from the darkness between the trees. The animal is said to be powerful and quick, capable of slipping through thick brush without making a sound.

Descriptions vary depending on the storyteller. In some accounts the creature resembles a mountain lion with unusual features. In others it is described as larger than any known wildcat in the region.

The legend carries deeper roots within Cherokee tradition.

One version of the story tells of a woman who once lived within a Cherokee community long ago. According to the legend, the tribe held sacred ceremonies that were meant only for certain members to witness. These rituals were connected to spiritual practices and the relationship between the people and the forces of the natural world.

Curious about what took place during the ceremonies, the woman secretly hid herself near the gathering place to watch the ritual. In order to remain hidden she covered herself with the skin of a mountain lion.

The story says that the spiritual leaders of the tribe discovered what she had done. As punishment for violating the sacred ceremony, she was cursed and transformed permanently into a creature that was neither human nor animal.

From that moment forward she was said to wander the forests as the Wampus Cat, moving through the mountains as a solitary figure feared and respected by those who knew the story.

Different variations of the legend exist, and some Cherokee storytellers emphasize that the tale was traditionally used as a cautionary lesson about respecting sacred traditions and boundaries. Over time the story blended with regional folklore and became part of the broader Appalachian tradition of mysterious mountain creatures.

In more recent years another strange creature has entered Appalachian folklore, particularly through stories shared online and through word of mouth among younger generations. This creature is often called the Not Deer.

At first glance the Not Deer resembles an ordinary deer standing at the edge of a forest or roadside clearing. But witnesses say that after a moment something about the animal seems wrong.

The body proportions may appear slightly distorted. The legs may bend at odd angles when the creature walks. The head sometimes turns in ways that seem unnatural for a deer.

Many people who claim to have encountered the creature say the most unsettling detail is its behavior. Unlike normal deer, which usually run when approached by humans, the Not Deer often remains still and watches.

Witnesses say it stares directly at them without fear, holding eye contact longer than a normal animal would. Some describe the feeling that the creature is observing them with a level of awareness that seems almost human.

The moment people often describe is the instant when recognition sets in. The shape may look like a deer, but the movement and posture feel wrong. Something about it does not fit with the natural behavior of wildlife.

Once that feeling appears, many witnesses say the same thing: ***You know it is wrong the moment you see it.***

Another legend frequently discussed in Appalachian Mountain folklore is the presence of large unidentified creatures often compared to Bigfoot.

Reports of large hairy humanoid figures have appeared across the Appalachian region for many decades. Dense forests, rugged terrain, and large stretches of wilderness have created an environment where such stories can spread easily.

One of the most famous Appalachian sightings occurred in the mountains of West Virginia during the 1960s. A group of campers reported hearing heavy footsteps moving through the woods around their campsite late at night. At first they assumed it was a large animal passing through the area.

Then they heard something unusual.

The footsteps circled the campsite slowly, as if whatever was moving in the darkness was observing them. Branches snapped under heavy weight, yet the figure itself remained mostly hidden among the trees.

At one point one of the campers shined a flashlight toward the sound. In the beam of light they briefly saw a large upright figure covered in dark hair standing between two trees at the edge of the clearing.

The figure reportedly stood well over seven feet tall with broad shoulders and enormous, muscular arms. When the light hit it directly, the figure turned and moved quickly into the forest, disappearing into the thick undergrowth.

The campers later described the movement as surprisingly fast for something so large.

Another well known story comes from eastern Tennessee near the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains. A local farmer claimed that several times during the late 1970s he found large footprints in the mud near his property. The prints appeared human in shape but were far larger than any normal human foot.

One evening while checking on livestock near dusk, the farmer noticed movement along the tree line. He looked to see a tall figure moving slowly through the trees on two legs.

When he called out toward the figure, it stopped and turned in his direction. He claimed the creature (enormous, hair-covered, a classic bigfoot) stood motionless for several seconds before walking deeper into the woods and vanishing from view under the setting sun.

The next day, in more daylight, the man returned to that spot and found the same large footprints matching the ones he had seen elsewhere. These prints reportedly continued appearing in the area for several weeks before finally disappearing.

Stories like these remain controversial, with skeptics attributing them to misidentified animals or exaggeration. Yet sightings of large unidentified figures continue to appear in reports from various parts of the Appalachian range.

In addition to these creatures and ghost stories, Appalachian folklore also contains a series of quiet warnings that many families still repeat.

These have become known as the Appalachian Mountain Warnings, and they're usually passed on as simple rules from older generations to younger ones. For example:

Never whistle in the woods at night.

Don't follow strange lights into the forest.

If something calls your name from the trees after dark, especially in the woods outside of your house, don't answer. Remember the old conjure woman in our protective spell story said this.

Another one is, if you are walking through the woods and come across something that does not belong there, it's best to leave the area immediately.

Stories circulate about hikers discovering strange objects deep in the forest. A wooden door nailed to the side of a tree where no structure stands nearby. A flight of stairs rising alone from the forest floor, and built there for no logical reason. Trees marked with bright paint or symbols that seem out of place among the natural surroundings.

In most cases these things may have ordinary explanations. Old construction debris, abandoned logging equipment, or hunters marking game trails.

Yet the warnings attached to these discoveries remain consistent.

It could also be marking someone's illegal moonshine still. Such folks don't go looking for trouble, but they don't take kindly to trespassers either, so the advice is, if you see something that does not make sense in the deep woods, the safest choice is to turn around and head back the way you came.

Many of these mountain sayings likely began as practical survival advice. The Appalachian wilderness can be dangerous, especially at night or in unfamiliar terrain. Encouraging people to stay alert and avoid wandering into unknown areas was a sensible way to protect inexperienced travelers.

Over time these practical lessons blended with the region's long tradition of storytelling. The result is a landscape filled with tales of strange creatures,

mysterious lights, and unexplained encounters moving quietly through the forests and hills.

And in the Appalachian Mountains, those stories continue to travel from one generation to the next, carried through the valleys and across the ridges of one of the oldest mountain ranges on Earth.

All of these legends lead toward a larger question about the relationship between landscape, culture, and imagination.

To understand that connection, we can step back and look at how the land, the people, and the stories of Appalachia became intertwined over centuries of history.

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### **My summary**

The folklore of Appalachia has grown slowly over centuries, shaped by the land and the people who settled among the mountains.

These mountains themselves are ancient, among the oldest ranges on Earth. Generations of people eventually made their homes within the hills, emigrating from communities in Europe with old pagan witchcraft as their religion, and ancient beliefs a part of everyday life. Once in these mountains, they often lived in small communities separated by miles of forest and rugged terrain.

Isolation played a role in preserving traditions that might have faded elsewhere. Families passed knowledge from one generation to the next. Stories traveled through conversation rather than books. The same tales were repeated by grandparents, parents, and children growing up in the same valleys and along the same winding creeks.

European settlers brought with them folk traditions that included herbal healing, protective prayers, charms, and rituals meant to guard against misfortune. These practices blended with older knowledge of the land that had long existed among Indigenous peoples who knew the forests, rivers, and plants of the region intimately.

Over time, these traditions and ideas mixed together in the mountains. Healing traditions developed that combined inherited European practices with local knowledge of Appalachian plants and landscapes. Spiritual ideas connected to the land and the animals living within it became part of everyday thinking in many communities.

And with these traditions, came stories.

Ghost soldiers wandering old battlefields. Lantern lights drifting between trees. Creatures moving silently through deep woods. Spectral encounters on dark mountain roads.

Each story traveled through the region in its own way, repeated and reshaped as it passed from one person to another. Some stories grew from historical events, others from unexplained experiences, and many from the natural human instinct to search for meaning in unfamiliar moments.

Living close to the land also means paying attention to the rhythms of the natural world. Mountain survival often depends on careful observation of weather, wildlife, and the changing seasons. In such environments, unusual sights and sounds rarely go unnoticed, or not talked about.

Stories became one way of passing along survival knowledge.

Over generations these lessons and experiences blended into a shared folklore that continues to shape how people think about the Appalachian Mountains.

Today the region remains one of the most story-rich landscapes in North America. Old cabins still sit along quiet ridges. Fog still drifts through the valleys in the early morning hours. Long stretches of forest remain, where few people ever set foot.

Within that setting the stories continue. Some people treat them simply as legends passed down through time, but others speak about them more cautiously.

In the Appalachian Mountains many old-timers will tell you that not every ghost story began as fiction.

And even now, in quiet mountain towns and remote hollows, those stories are still being told.

So, maybe these stories are simply the products of imagination and isolation in one of the oldest mountain ranges on Earth, or maybe the Appalachian Mountains hold real mysteries, that the modern world has still failed to fully explain.



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***ending sign off***

Thank you sincerely for investigating Appalachian Witchcraft, Spooky Stories, and Old Mountain Legends, with me.

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Until our next adventure I'm your host Lex Gordon...

*Stay Wild, **Lunar Eclipse** Child!*