

Ghost Train of Bostian's Bridge (from Tar Heel Junior Historian) ^[1]



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The Ghost Train of Bostian's Bridge

by Tony Reevey

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Tar Heel Junior Historian Association, NC Museum of History

See also: [Bostian Bridge Train Wreck](#) ^[2] (Encyclopedia of North Carolina)



Bostian Bridge Train Wreck, August 27, 1891. Photo by Stimson Studio, Statesville, NC, courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives.

^[3]Bostian's Bridge is a sixty-foot-high arch bridge made of brick and stone. Built for the [Western North Carolina Railroad](#) ^[4] in 1858, it crosses Third Creek just west of [Statesville](#) ^[5].

On August 27, 1891, a passenger train left [Salisbury](#) for [Asheville](#) ^[6] on the Western North Carolina Railroad (by then part of a railroad known as the Richmond and Danville). When the train got to Bostian's Bridge, it was 3:00 a.m. Most of the passengers were asleep. As the train crossed the bridge, it left the tracks and plunged off the bridge into the creek. Twenty-two people died from the fall or from drowning. The cause of the wreck remains unknown.

A legend surrounds the wreck, though. The story people tell goes like this: Fifty years later, very early in the morning of August 27, 1941, a woman was waiting along the road that ran beside the railroad tracks near Statesville. Her husband had gone to get help after their car had a flat tire.

The woman heard a train whistle in the distance. A headlight appeared down the tracks, sweeping through the trees as the engine approached. The woman noticed the huge bridge in front of the train. As the engine began to cross it, she heard a horrible crash. She saw the train plunge off the bridge, its old-fashioned wooden passenger cars splintering into pieces. They piled into a jagged mound below.

The woman could hear the screams and groans of wounded people. She ran across the road and through a field to the

side of the creek. Up close, the sight was even more terrible. The engine, its tender (the car attached to the engine carrying its water and coal), and passenger cars formed a twisted mass of wreckage being flooded by the waters of Third Creek.

Hearing a car pull up on the road behind her, the woman ran back across the field, screaming that a terrible train wreck had just happened. Her husband was in the car with a stranger, the man who owned the country store just down the road. The three of them headed back across the field and looked down into the quiet waters of Third Creek. No wreck was there.

Of course, the men thought that the woman had fallen asleep and dreamed up the whole thing. But when they continued their trip, she made her husband stop by the Statesville train station to find out if there had been a wreck. When the couple asked at the ticket window, the station agent looked up from his work. "Funny you should ask," he said. "There was no wreck on the railroad last night. But, fifty years ago today, there was a horrible wreck out there at Bostian's Bridge." As he said this, the woman screamed and fainted. She knew that she had seen a ghost train.

On August 27, 2010, a group of twelve individuals who considered themselves amateur ghost hunters gathered at Bostian's Bridge hoping to catch a glimpse of the ghost train. Unfortunately, a real train came down the tracks about 2:45a.m., the same time they anticipated a sighting of the ghost train. The group did not immediately run from it, initially believing it was, in fact, the ghost train. Christopher Kaiser, 29, who had ventured onto the bridge itself, died at the scene and two others were injured.

Image credits:

N_88_9_10 Bostian Bridge Train Wreck Iredell Co. North Carolina State Archives on Flickr. Online at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/5454429942> [7]. Accessed 5/2022.

Additional resources:

Rivenbark, Jeff and David Whisenant. 2010. "Man hoping to see 'ghost train' hit, killed by real train." WBTV.com. Online at <http://www.wbtv.com/Global/story.asp?S=13054055> [8]

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