

THE PHANTOM AT ROTHWELL PARK DAM

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Teen-Agers ‘See Thing’

“Phantom” Is Reported At Rothwell Lake Dam

By Mike Childers

Moberly’s Rothwell Park has been the scene recently for a considerable amount of “ghost-hunting” by several groups of local teen-agers. The “phantom”, unlike most phantoms, takes the form of an automobile and is said to be seen, when viewed from the west side of the dam on almost any dark night “parked” along the dam at the south end of Rothwell Lake.

The apparition, it is said, appears to be an older automobile – perhaps 1950-53 model. There is some speculation as to which make of car it might be, although most of the people who have seen it readily agree that it looks like the sort of car one might see in an advertisement which in artist has conceived a general image of a “just plain old car.”

It is felt, however, that this lack of specifics does not detract from the realism portrayed by the image.

Teen-agers are not the only people who have seen the “phantom,” a little research has found. Several adults, some of them parents of the teenage “ghost-hunters,” have viewed the car and vouch for its realistic appearance.

The automobile was seen nearly a year ago. Two teenagers driving through the park encountered what they assumed was an automobile parked on the dam, only to have it disappear as they drove closer. The two returned with other teenagers and found the illusion to be the same.

Many Visit Dam

Soon, several carloads of teenagers were making visits to the dam, nearly all encountering the same circumstances. The car lost its popularity for a while, but recently gained new audiences as conversations between teen-agers turned up several alleged “discovers” of the image. The grapevine was hot with tales and original witnesses found a renewed interest in the “phantom car.”

Although a few more imaginative adventurers claim to see a driver – some insisting the “he” is smoking a cigarette – it is generally agreed that the contents of the “phantom” are vague.

The “phantom” leaves the impression of facing westward, with its unlighted headlights, grill and windshield appearing distinctly. Viewers say that it is black in color

and sits toward the left side of the dam at about the tenth guardpole, which is believed to be 10 to 12 feet nearer the west end of the dam than when originally seen.

Only one recent tragedy is known to have taken place along the dam, researchers have found. A woman took her life at a similar area of the dam two years ago. Moberly Police report, however, that the victim's car, according to their recollections of the incident, was not parked on the dam. This bit of information put a damper on the opinions of some spectators who had pondered that perhaps the "phantom" was keeping vigil. The mere ardent spectators – or the more superstitious, as the case may be – are delving into the past for more information. Differing with these, another group of spectators tend to regard the image as more of a premonition or forewarning. Their suspicions, of course, remain to be seen.

All in all, the image remains a mystery – one which some student of the effects of light and shadow or an expert on reflection and refraction might solve.

"Be Careful !"

Then again the "phantom" may never reveal its nature. And unless your car is passing along the dam and is suddenly forced off into the watery depths by the ghost-machine, you may never know.

It remains, perhaps, that the phantom car will take its place among the sights and sounds the night that cater to the imagination and have mystified and plagued the minds of men for countless years. For we are but mortals, and not always capable of judging the things which are not understood.

The only thing we can say is – if you're ever driving across the dam at night and the car begins to dive toward you – you had better put your car in reverse and let the phantom dwell as it may.

