

3585

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Spook Hill

other names/site number FMSF #PO8149

2. Location

street & number North Wales Drive between Burns Avenue and Spook Hill Elementary not for publication

city or town Lake Wales vicinity

state Florida code FL county Polk code 105 zip code 33853

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Glissa Totane, Deputy SHPO 2/12/19
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature]

4.5.2019

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	2	objects
1	2	total

Name of related multiple property listings

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A"

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Asphalt

walls N/A

roof N/A

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1950-1969

Significant Dates

1950

1960

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository

Spook Hill
Name of Property

Polk County, Florida
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 7	4 4 2 6 9 4	3 0 8 7 6 9 2
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Max Adriel Imberman, Historic Preservationist

organization Florida Division of Historical Resources date November 2018

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (850) 245-6341

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32303

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Lake Wales

street & number 201 W. Central Avenue telephone _____

city or town Lake Wales state Florida zip code 33853

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Spook Hill

Name of Property

Polk County, Florida

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

SUMMARY

Spook Hill is a tourist attraction site opened by 1950, located in Lake Wales, Florida, along North Wales Drive between Burns Avenue and the northeast exit of Spook Hill Elementary School. Characterized by its gravity hill optical illusion, where cars seem to go uphill when put into neutral, the Spook Hill site has been maintained as a tourist attraction for over six decades. The southern end of the site is the beginning of a very shallow upwards incline headed north along North Wales Drive, which changes to a high, steep upwards incline ending at Burns Avenue. A white line is painted across the road at this point of transition, at which drivers are intended to park, put their car into neutral, and slowly roll backwards downhill while feeling like they are being pulled uphill. The optical illusion is caused by the view of the horizon being obscured by the high hill. The site is intended to be experienced facing north and is a one-way street. At the southern end of the site is a newly-installed instruction sign, placed in the same location and bearing much of the same text as a series of previous signs placed at that location in the historic period and beyond. An archway sign hangs over the white painted line. This sign is also new, but it is also a replacement for a series of previous signs at that very location. The replacement signs minimally impact the integrity of Spook Hill.

SETTING

Spook Hill is located in Lake Wales, a city in Polk County, Florida. It is located to the northeast of Lake Wales' historic core, where two National Register historic districts are located, the Lake Wales Commercial Historic District and the Lake Wales Historic Residential District. Just to the southeast of Spook Hill is North Lake Wailes, a small lake. To its southwest is Spook Hill Elementary School. To the east of the site is a housing development. Lake Wales has a population of approximately 16,000 and the area in which Spook Hill is located is not as thoroughly developed as other parts of the city. The area directly surrounding the site has multiple empty lots to the west and is characterized primarily by the road and the wall of trees lightly obscuring the development to the east.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Spook Hill (Photo 1) is a stretch of one-lane paved asphalt road with grass along both sides. At the southern end of Spook Hill, where most visitors will enter the site via automobile, a sign (Photo 2) is placed just to the east of the road. Depicting a ghost, the sign offers visitors a short version of the legend of Spook Hill and gives instructions for how to experience the site. Visitors are instructed to drive north along North Wales Drive until they reach a painted white line (Photo 3), where they will then put their car into neutral and move backwards. This line is marked by an overhanging metallic archway with letters in a distinctive font reading "SPOOK HILL." Just past this archway a steep incline begins which leads up to Burns Avenue. The area between the sign and the white line is a slight upward incline which

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Spook Hill

Name of Property

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County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

is visually confused by the large hill it leads to, causing many visitors to believe they are actually heading downhill. An alternate view (Photo 4) taken facing south from the archway shows that the first segment of the attraction is an incline, not a decline. A view down the entire length of Spook Hill from Burns Avenue (Photo 5) shows the relatively undeveloped feel of the area surrounding Spook Hill.

ALTERATIONS

The Spook Hill site has received very few significant alterations. The road has been maintained over the decades but has not been replaced in terms of materials. The path has not been altered. The only notable changes to Spook Hill itself are that the signage has been consistently replaced since the attraction was first created, even during the period of significance. Both the current roadside sign and overhanging archway sign were placed since 2015. While impacting integrity, these changes are not especially harmful to integrity because the fundamental parts of the resource, those being the hill and roadway, have been preserved.

INTEGRITY

Spook Hill retains integrity for listing upon the National Register of Historic Places. It has integrity of location, as it has not moved. It has integrity of setting, even though some development has occurred in the surrounding area, because the feeling of the setting has not been drastically altered. It has integrity of design, even though the mid-century signs and archway signs have been lost and replaced. The road and hill, the most pivotal resources of the site, have not been significantly altered. Most importantly, the grade of the roadway has not been modified. It has integrity of materials and workmanship, because the roadway and hill have not fundamentally changed their character. It has integrity of feeling and association because the site maintains a similar viewshed to the historic period, and its characteristic optical illusion has been unchanged.

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Spook Hill
Name of Property
Polk County, Florida
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

SUMMARY

Spook Hill is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level in the area of Entertainment/Recreation. The period of significance for Spook Hill is 1950-1969, starting in the year with the oldest recorded image of the site as a tourist attraction, and running through the mid-century period in which it had its greatest local prominence. Spook Hill was a significant local tourist attraction well-suited to the post-Second World War automotive age. A gravity hill optical illusion which presents visitors with the feeling of driving uphill when they are truly going downhill, the site has experienced the development of a rich heritage of local legends, mostly concerned with the supernatural. Expressed through signage, advertising brochures, and even a locally-produced play, the legends of Spook Hill are an excellent example of the craft of legend-building applied to a local tourist attraction. With an expansive lore consisting of a series of narratives which increasingly connected the site to the pivotal aspects of Florida history, the stories of Spook Hill show the ways that successful branding imbued a site with increased meaning and appeal. The site's history also demonstrates the connections between Lakes Wales' mid-century tourist attractions and other local businesses, a synergistic relationship characterized by sponsorships, advertising, and printed materials.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Lake Wales History

The city of Lake Wales, located in the geographic center of the Florida peninsula, has its origins in the early twentieth century, built upon a sand dune now known as the Lake Wales Ridge. The ridge runs 150 miles from north to south down the center of the Floridian peninsula, and the city of Lake Wales is right at its center. The ecology of the Lake Wales Ridge is distinct from that of the rest of the state, being a remnant of an ancient period when much of the land mass currently known as Florida was submerged beneath the ocean. The ridge, containing the highest geological points in the state, was a series of islands above the waves. This distinction in ancient times gives the communities along the Lake Wales Ridge a different ecological framework than the rest of the state, characterized by the many spring-fed lakes which eventually inspired so many of their place names, including Lake Wales and Lakeland.¹

As the settlement of Florida expanded southward throughout the nineteenth century, the area now known as Lake Wales retained a frontier status. Difficult to reach as one of the state's highest points, with no roads or railroads leading to it, few Americans chose to settle in the region, and while many Seminoles had a heavy presence in the region, the area where Lake Wales would be built was relatively uninhabited. Far from the coasts where most of the development was occurring on the peninsula, the

¹ Jan Privett, *Lake Wales*, Images of America Collection, Arcadia Publishing, 2010, 7.

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Spook Hill

Name of Property

Polk County, Florida

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

area upon which the city of Lake Wales would later be built was characterized by its remoteness, as well as the resources available for extraction, with abundant supplies of pine wood and turpentine, with ample room for the production of citrus and cattle.²

Lake Wales takes its name from a small body of water, Lake Wailes, located in the heart of the city. This lake, named Watts Lake in the nineteenth century, was renamed Lake Wailes in 1879 by a surveyor named Sidney Irving Wailes.³ In 1911, four Florida businessmen who had formed the Lake Wales Land Company to establish a community alongside the lake, slightly altering the name of the lake to derive their city's name because the word "Wailes" would draw connections to crying. The owners of the Lake Wales Land Company saw an opportunity to form a community around resource extraction, and the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad arrived to connect Lake Wales to the cities to the north in that same year.⁴

The owners of the Lake Wales land company worked quickly to establish industry in Lake Wales, because the presence of jobs would be crucial for establishing a community. Turpentine would be the first major industry in Lake Wales, and around it the city began to spring up.⁵ By the end of 1912, the city founders had already established their turpentine factory, and were trying to create infrastructure to support it. One major building in this effort was the Hotel Wales, a Southern-style building with a mansard roof meant to serve as a resort destination.⁶ In the earliest days of the community, the Lake Wales Land Company built many resources necessary for a successful city, including a school.⁷

Lake Wales grew rapidly, enjoying a central location in the State of Florida and access to multiple industries, including turpentine and citrus. By 1920, a mere decade after Lake Wales first came to be, the area had been completely transformed. The untamed wilderness had been overtaken by citrus production and a quickly-expanding community.⁸ Over the next decades, the city continued to grow, spreading in all directions. Attractions developed as early as the 1920s, such as Bok Tower Gardens, a National Historic Landmark featuring a 250-acre garden and a Gothic Revival "Singing Tower" began to draw tourists to the city, an area that had been essentially wilderness a decade earlier. While the seeds had been planted for a successful city, boosters wanted to make sure that there were visitors to bring in dollars, and Spook Hill was a significant local example.

² Jan Privett, *Lake Wales*, Images of America Collection, Arcadia Publishing, 2010, 7.

³ Allen Morris, *Florida Place Names: Alachua to Zolfo Springs*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, 143-144.

⁴ Jan Privett, *Lake Wales*, Images of America Collection, Arcadia Publishing, 2010, 7-8.

⁵ Janyce Barnwell Ahl, *Crown Jewel of the Highlands, Lake Wales, Florida*, 1983, 9.

⁶ Janyce Barnwell Ahl, *Crown Jewel of the Highlands, Lake Wales, Florida*, 1983, 122.

⁷ Janyce Barnwell Ahl, *Crown Jewel of the Highlands, Lake Wales, Florida*, 1983, 21.

⁸ Janyce Barnwell Ahl, *Crown Jewel of the Highlands, Lake Wales, Florida*, 1983, 108.

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Spook Hill
Name of Property
Polk County, Florida
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Spook Hill is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level in the area of Entertainment/Recreation. The period of significance for Spook Hill is 1950-1969, starting in the year with the oldest recorded image of the site as a tourist attraction, and running through the mid-century period in which it had its greatest local prominence.

What is a Gravity Hill?

Spook Hill is classified as a type of optical illusion commonly referred to as a gravity hill. According to psychological science researchers Paola Bressan, Luigi Garlaschelli, and Monica Barracano, gravity hills, also commonly known as spook hills, “are natural places where cars put into neutral are seen to move uphill on a slightly sloping road, apparently defying the law of gravity. Typically, the “spooky” stretch of road is rather short (50-90 m), only a few meters wide, and surrounded by a natural hill landscape, without nearby buildings.”⁹ This description fits the Spook Hill site. To the north of the line where visitors are asked to stop and put their cars in neutral is a large sloping hill which blocks the visitor’s view of the horizon. The site is not completely undeveloped, with Spook Hill Elementary School visible to the southwest, and a housing development to the east, but the overall sense of place is defined by an uninterrupted view of trees and sky, especially if the visitor chooses to stay looking forward.

Gravity hills exist throughout the world, with many existing throughout the United States as well, with other notable examples being Confusion Hill in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, Gravity Hill in Baltimore County, Maryland, and Mystery Spot in Benzie County, Michigan.¹⁰ There is even at least one other site named Spook Hill in the United States, located in Burkinsville, Maryland. Many gravity hills are popularly claimed to be places where the laws of gravity are warped or reversed, while others, including Spook Hill, have their odd effects ascribed to the supernatural. However, Lake Wales’ Spook Hill is not simply notable for its optical illusion. It is notable for the legends which have developed around it and given it further meaning to the Lake Wales community.

Legends of Spook Hill: A History of Stories and Roadside Signs

Throughout the twentieth century, Lake Wales residents and promoters offered explanations for the seemingly strange behavior of Spook Hill. While the appeal of Spook Hill results from a gravity hill

⁹ Paola Bressan, Luigi Garlaschelli, and Monica Barracano, “Antigravity Hills are Visual Illusions,” *Psychological Science*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (September 2003), 441.

¹⁰ Paola Bressan, Luigi Garlaschelli, and Monica Barracano, “Antigravity Hills are Visual Illusions,” *Psychological Science*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (September 2003), 441.

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Spook Hill

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N/A

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optical illusion, the lore surrounding the hill has always connected the phenomenon with the supernatural. The legend of Spook Hill has evolved over time, and is best and most famously expressed by the series of signs that inhabited the Spook Hill site, each of which contained a version of the legend, as well as directions for visitors to get the full Spook Hill experience. In some cases, these sign also contained advertising for local businesses or other local tourist attractions, demonstrating the ways in which Spook Hill was integrated with the greater Lake Wales community as an economic driver.

The oldest recorded sign at Spook Hill was captured in a 1953 photograph at the site. Like many of the signs that would follow, it included spectral imagery, with the figure of a ghost projecting from its right side. The center of the sign was decorated with the words “Weird!” and “Fantastic!,” highlighting the impression that those who placed the sign hoped that visitors would use to describe the site. In the bottom-left corner of the sign, the legend of Spook Hill was told for the first time. It read as follows:

Legend

The story relates of how the old Negro parked his car at the foot of this hill. He headed for the Lake. The song froze on his lips as he glanced back at his Jalopy. Slowly his old car was backing up-hill – *the motor was not running* – “Them’s Spooks,” he was quoted as saying before he fainted. That is how Spook Hill came to be named.

*Chamber of Commerce*¹¹

This early version of the Spook Hill legend seems designed to highlight the site’s historic connections to Lake Wales, as well as increase the engagement of visitors by connecting their experience to the one upon which the attraction purportedly derived its name. The African-American figure in the story was headed to North Lake Wailes, a small lake just to the southeast of the Spook Hill site. The use of the term *jalopy* is intended to highlight the *pastness* of this story, with that term primarily associated with the 1920s, and with automobiles in poor condition. His encounter with Spook Hill took place upon him leaving his car, while the 1950s visitor would usually remain seated within their automobile. The man is presented as a somewhat comical figure to whom the Spook Hill visitor could compare themselves. While the man in the story was surprised by the Spook Hill event he experienced, and fainted in response to it, the 1950s visitor could take it in stride, having been told exactly what would occur.

¹¹ Sign at Spook Hill in Lake Wales, Florida,” Floridamemory.com, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/18124>, Accessed November 27, 2018.

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Spook Hill

Name of Property

Polk County, Florida

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The sign depicted in the 1953 photograph also demonstrates the connection that Spook Hill had to the Lake Wales business community, as well as other local tourist attractions. Along the bottom of the sign is a large message, reading “CLEAN WITH *Prather's* LAUNDRY – CLEANERS.” The legend of Spook Hill, as depicted on this particular sign, is attributed to the Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce.



Figure 1: 1953 photograph of Spook Hill signage. This sign depicts the commercial synergies of the site, advertising a local laundry, as well as the Great Masterpiece, another Lake Wales attraction. This sign was sponsored and at least partially written by the Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce. Source: Florida Memory

Another sign just past the Spook Hill sign is an advertisement for the nearby Great Masterpiece tourist attraction, which featured a 300,000-tile mosaic reconstruction of Leonardo da Vinci’s painting “The Last Supper.” The mosaic was first created in Berlin in 1929, and was taken apart during the Second World War to be hidden from the Nazi regime, which had confiscated many works of art. After the Second World War, the mosaic was shipped to America and reconstructed, finding its way to Lake Wales around 1950 to be used as the heart of a tourist attraction.¹² While the Great Masterpiece attraction was eventually closed in 1978, it was in 1953 time considered to be one of the prominent tourism spots of Central Florida.¹³

A second sign, photographed in 1956, used the iconography of a book to give the lore surrounding Spook Hill a weightier connotation. The text upon the sign read as follows:

¹² Joy Wallace Dickinson, “Egg Hunt Drew Throng to Lake Wales Attraction,” *Orlando Sentinel*, March 27, 2016, [Orlandosentinel.com, https://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/os-joy-wallace-dickinson-032716-20160327-column.html](https://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/os-joy-wallace-dickinson-032716-20160327-column.html), Accessed November 27, 2018.

¹³ Joy Wallace Dickinson, “Egg Hunt Drew Throng to Lake Wales Attraction,” *Orlando Sentinel*, March 27, 2016, [Orlandosentinel.com, https://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/os-joy-wallace-dickinson-032716-20160327-column.html](https://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/os-joy-wallace-dickinson-032716-20160327-column.html), Accessed November 27, 2018.

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Spook Hill

Name of Property

Polk County, Florida

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The Legend of Spook Hill.

The old negro parked his car here so he could go fishing. He looked back as he started for the lake and the smile on his face froze... His old Jalopy was slowly moving back up hill with the motor not running! "Dem's Spooks," cried the old man and then fainted. That is how Spook Hill got its name.....¹⁴

While the story told in this version of the legend is similar to the one captured on the sign from a few years earlier, some small details had been changed. A reason is given for the old man's visit to the lake. The new inclusion of the detail of fishing being available at the lake may have served to subtly indicate the other types of activities available in town within a short driving distance. In addition, the dialogue change given, changing the man from having said "Them's Spooks" to "Dem's Spooks," introduces a dialect to the character upon whom the legend originally surrounded.

The text on the Spook Hill sign as captured in the 1956 photograph also served to connect the Spook Hill site with the Great Masterpiece attraction. The sign read:

"Don't miss seeing *The GREAT MASTERPIECE* and the beautiful Gardens of Peace... Fascinating Jungle Walk and the Tree of ages. Court of Flags. Da Vinci's Gallery of futuristic inventions. Visit the Gift Shop and Snack Bar. Picnic Tables. See the amazing Howell Glass Blowers at work."¹⁵

This sign continued to demonstrate the advertising synergy possible at the Spook Hill tourism site. Since nearly every visitor to Spook Hill would have been in an automobile, roadside attractions would have been an especially appropriate service to advertise, especially ones within driving distance.



Figure 2: 1950 Postcard advertising Spook Hill as a tourist attraction. The iconography on the top of the card matches the design of the 1953 photograph, but the image on the bottom of the card appears to depict a differently-designed sign, though one that matches the layout of the one captured on film three years later. Source: Florida Memory

¹⁴ "A Couple reads a sign displaying the legend of Spook Hill - Lake Wales, Florida," Floridamemory.com, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/73760>, Accessed November 27, 2018.

¹⁵ "A Couple reads a sign displaying the legend of Spook Hill - Lake Wales, Florida," Floridamemory.com, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/73760>, Accessed November 27, 2018.

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Spook Hill

Name of Property

Polk County, Florida

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Figure 3: This 1956 photograph depicts a couple driving a 1956 Buick Century coupe parked at the Spook Hill sign. The sign imagery at this time portrayed the legend of Spook Hill as though it were written in a book. The sign also advertised the Great Masterpiece, another prominent local attraction. Source: Florida Memory

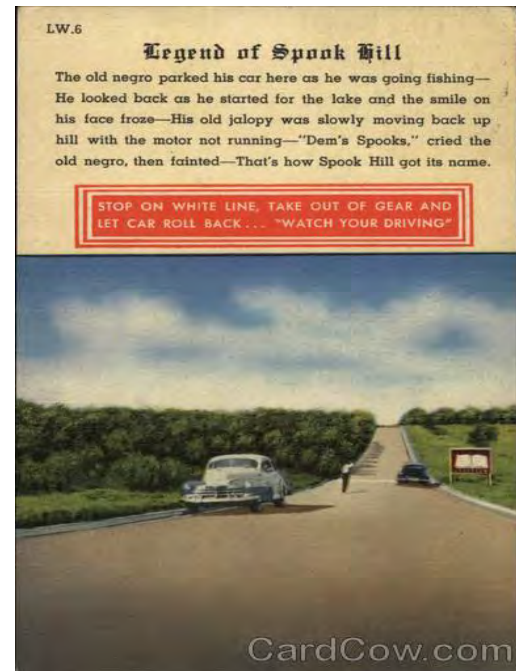


Figure 3: This postcard depicts the same version of the Spook Hill sign as the previous figure. The postcard meant to draw a national audience to the site focuses on Spook Hill's legend and its environment. Source: Cardcow.com

An advertising leaflet for the Spook Hill site, entitled *The Mystery of Spook Hill*, was first released in 1954. The brochure, which greatly expanded the lore behind Spook Hill, was sponsored and released by a restaurant named Barney's, which is described on the back of the brochure as "Famous for Food."¹⁶ Barney's, in a contemporary postcard, is described as a place "WHERE FASTIDIOUS PEOPLE GET SUPERIOR SERVICE AT MODERATE COST," a strait-laced identity for a business which readily associated itself with a supernaturally-themed tourist attraction.¹⁷ This indicates that Spook Hill at the time had a mainstream appeal as part of the constellation of tourist attractions that had made Lake Wales a successful vacation destination within Central Florida.

¹⁶ "The Mystery of Spook Hill – Lake Wales, Florida," 1954, Floridamemory.com, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/335510>, Accessed November 27, 2018.

¹⁷ "Barney's Restaurant," Cardcow.com, <https://www.cardcow.com/44494/barneys-restaurant-lake-wales-florida/>, Accessed November 27, 2018.

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Spook Hill

Name of Property

Polk County, Florida

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The interior of the *Mystery of Spook Hill* advertising brochure is primarily concerned with providing a historical rationale behind the supernatural explanation for the Spook Hill phenomenon. After retelling the legend using the later version of the tale, the brochure drives into the story of a presumably-fictional sixteenth-century pirate named Captain Gimme Sarsaparilla. Captain Sarsaparilla, a violent and feared scourge of the seas as the story goes, “tired of the black pirate flag and came to Lake Wales to retire and lead the life of a gentleman. It is said that he wished to devote the remainder of his days to whale fishing.”¹⁸ The area that would eventually become Lake Wales is

centrally-located in Florida, with the closest beach being 75 miles away, and therefore very far from any available supply of whales for fishing, especially in a time period without roads or modern forms of transportation. Captain Sarsaparilla, in the legend, was accompanied by a “trusted aide” by the name of Teniente Vanilla Vincenzo Alfredo Nieto Isidoro Lima Llano Alvarez. The story explains that, when Alvarez died, he was buried at the foot of Spook Hill, at the very point at which cars would eventually park to experience the Spook Hill phenomenon. Captain Sarsaparilla was said “to repose in Davy Jones’ locker at the bottom of North Lake Wales.”¹⁹ In this story, both men’s bodies were laid to rest in places fundamental to the site’s appeal of the Spook Hill tourist attraction, the two bodies representing an elemental connection between land and water in a land-locked Central Florida community. This 16th century narrative, drawing from the stories of Spanish piracy during the Age of Exploration, gives Spook Hill and the rest of Lake Wales a connection to the broader Florida lore from which many of the state attractions drew their appeal. A far-inland site with no tangible 16th-century pirate connection was given one in legend in order to draw in the spirit of one of the state of Florida’s most marketable narratives.

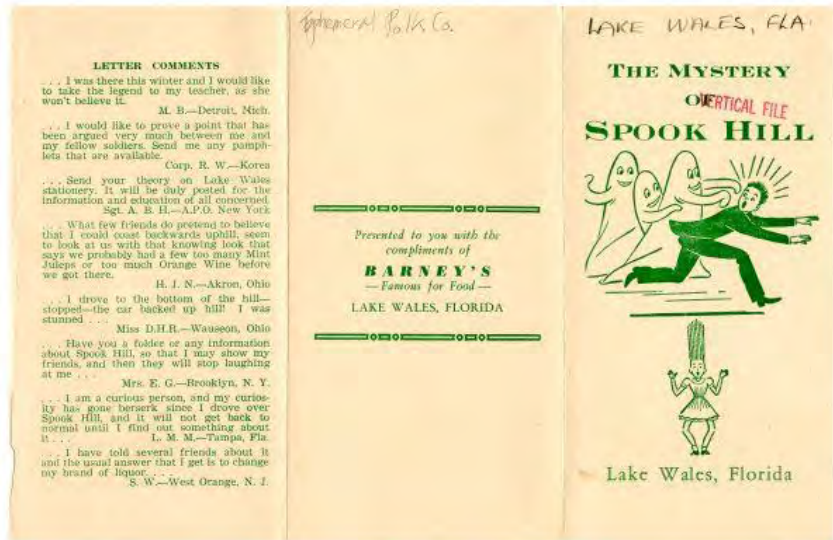


Figure 4: 1954 advertising brochure released by Barney’s Restaurant of Lake Wales. This document gave visitors a greatly-expanded version of Spook Hill lore, offering a tangible explanation for the gravity hill phenomenon which involved centuries-old pirate spirits. The brochure also featured commentary on Spook Hill from around the world. Source: Florida Memory

¹⁸ “The Mystery of Spook Hill – Lake Wales, Florida,” 1954, Floridamemory.com, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/335510>, Accessed November 27, 2018.

¹⁹ “The Mystery of Spook Hill – Lake Wales, Florida,” 1954, Floridamemory.com, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/335510>, Accessed November 27, 2018.

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The brochure goes on to reveal that the spirits of the two buried pirates were at peace until the moment “the old Negro stopped his car at the foot of the hill. It rested directly upon the chest of Teniente Vanilla... Now the weight of a car is said to approximate the weight of 16 dead men. Everyone knows that pirates have a particular aversion to ‘16 MEN ON A DEAD MAN’S CHEST.’” In response to the weight of the jalopy pressing upon Vanilla’s casket, his spirit called for the assistance of the spirit of the captain he had served so faithfully in life, and his captain obliged. Sarsaparilla’s spirit, in the story, pushed the car up the hill to remove it from atop of his friend’s burial place.²⁰ The story within the brochure is written in a humorous and self-aware tone, but it was intended to draw the reader in, telling them that if they visited Spook Hill and rested their car on a particular spot, they would themselves be angering the eternal spirit of a bloodthirsty pirate captain.

The marketing and commemoration of the local lore surrounding Spook Hill were not limited to signs and brochures. In 1957, the Lake Wales Rotary Club sponsored the production of a play entitled “The Legend of Spook Hill.” Written by Fred H. Kahler, who at that time was the manager of the Lake Shore Plantation Inn in Lake Wales, an antebellum Southern Plantation-themed hotel (which had previously been the Hotel Wales, the first hotel built in town), and directed by Mrs. F. K. Hart, the play aimed to provide an explanation for the supposed haunting which gave Spook Hill its name. An advertising packet for the play included a re-telling of the story of the “Dem’s Spooks!” story, with the play itself serving as a prequel in the same way that the Captain Sarsaparilla story had earlier. While the script of this play is unavailable, documents provide a list of characters and the locations in which scenes were set. Taking place in 1821, the cast included Bob Whitcomb, described as a “Gentleman Pirate,” Alosa, an “Indian Maiden,” Neekow, an “Indian Squaw,” Catumneechee, described simply as “Indian,” Banks, a “Run-a-way Slave,” John Scott, a “Trader,” Don Alonzo, a “Pirate Captain,” Bones Gifford, an “English Pirate,” Hitch McGillicuddy, a “Scotch Pirate,” and Blackie George, another “English Pirate.” The setting alternated between an “Indian hut” and nearby swampland



GERALD DRAWDY, playing the part of an Indian, welcomes his white friend, Charles Chowning, a trader from Port Tampa, in an opening scene of “The Legend of Spook Hill,” showing Friday, Saturday, Monday and Tuesday nights. Left to right are Drawdy, Dorothy Drawdy, Joan Muhleberg, Chowning and Lee Roy Horton, Jr.

Figure 5: Surviving photograph depicting a scene from the 1957 play “The Legend of Spook Hill.” Sponsored by the Lake Wales Rotary Club, this play provided yet another explanation for the Spook Hill phenomenon. Source: Lake Wales Museum

²⁰ “The Mystery of Spook Hill – Lake Wales, Florida,” 1954, Floridamemory.com, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/335510>, Accessed November 27, 2018.

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and took place over the period of about a week. The specifics of the play's overall plot are not included in surviving documents, but a single image from the play has survived, showing that a friendly interaction between a Native American family and a white trader accompanied by a run-away slave was an aspect of the play's story.²¹ Much like the pirate story had earlier, this play attempted to connect Spook Hill with the iconic elements of Florida lore. Set in the state's frontier period, in an area portrayed as far from American civilization, the Spook Hill story seems to have been crafted in a way which crossed cultures, focused around a meeting point between whites, Native Americans, and a black runaway slave. It derived from the varying types of people who would have visited an area so far removed from American society, with its traders and pirates. In writing the play, Kahler appears to have attempted to craft an elemental tale to capture the spirit of a lost Florida from over a century earlier.

Much like the previous versions of the legend, the "Legend of Spook Hill" play performances were inextricably tied to the Lake Wales business community. Sponsored by the Rotary Club, an association of local business leaders, the play was directly funded by dozens of local commercial enterprises, including other attractions such as the Great Masterpiece and Casa de Josephina, a local historic home.²² The play itself was written by the manager of a local hotel for which historical branding was especially important. The Lake Shore Plantation Inn, a building designed to look like an antebellum Southern plantation, featured a primarily black "efficiently trained staff – all costume in the dress of an era of the Southern plantation... in an atmosphere of a by-gone day," according to a contemporary postcard.²³ In



Figure 6: Three decades of views up Spook Hill. Shots from the 1950s (left), 1960s (center), and 1990s (right) show the ways in which the fundamental character of Spook Hill survived the decades. Up until the present, it has maintained a feeling of eerie remoteness, even with its placement in the heart of developed Lake Wales. Visitors often leave their cars to ponder the source of their strange experiences. Source: Florida Memory

²¹ Advertising Packet for "The Legend of Spook Hill" Play, 1957, Lake Wales Museum Archives.

²² Advertising Packet for "The Legend of Spook Hill" Play, 1957, Lake Wales Museum Archives.

²³ "The Lake Shore Plantation Inn," Cardcow.com, <https://www.cardcow.com/659842/lake-shore-plantation-inn-wales-florida/>, Accessed November 28, 2018.

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SPECIAL NOTE OF APPRECIATION TO: Hunt Bros., Alcoma Assn. Inc., Townsend Sash Door & Lumber Co., Lake Wales Citrus Growers Assn., Central Florida Gas, Draper Funeral Home, Griffith Funeral Home, Frank Atkisson and V.F.W. for the use of their equipment and employees in stage construction.

The Play—"THE LEGEND OF SPOOK HILL"

Was sponsored by the following civic minded individuals and firms

ACCOUNTANTS

Bunting & Comer & Co.

ADVERTISING

Outdoor Display, Inc.

AGRICULTURAL SUPPLIES

Southern Dolomite Co.

Wilson-Toomer Company

Ridge Fertilizer Co.

APARTMENTS & COTTAGES

Restanite Motor Court

Central Ave. Apts.

APPLIANCES (Electric)

Mann-Albritton & Co.

ATTRACTIONS

Great Masterpiece

Casa De Josephina

AUTO & BODY PAINTING

W. H. Moran Painting & Body Works

AUTO REPAIRING

Leo Ellis Garage

Modern Body Shop

Norton Brothers Garage

AUTO SALES & SERVICE (New & Used)

Scamehorn (Buick)

Moffett Motor Co. (Ford)

Paul Allen Inc. (Chevrolet)

Briggs Sales Corp. (Dodge, Plymouth & Chrysler)

George Williamson (Cadillac & Oldsmobile)

AUTO SUPPLIES & SERVICE

Boyte Parts & Service

Tower Motors Inc.

Cain's Parts & Service

AUTOMOBILES (Used)

Owens Motors

AWNINGS

Peterson's Factory

BAKERS

Bon Ton Bakery

BANKS

Lake Wales State Bank

(Continued on next Page)

Figure 7: A selection of the Lake Wales Rotary Club-affiliated businesses which helped to organize and sponsor the 1957 "Legend of Lake Wales" play. The performance was truly a community effort. Source: Lake Wales Museum

the mid-century era, a time when great changes rocked American culture and society, the sense of *pastness*, a tangible connection to another era, was a popular way to draw tourist attention and its resulting dollars. For this reason, the legends behind Spook Hill began to reach further and further back into the past. As an attraction experienced through the automobile, perhaps the most iconic representation of the modern era, the use of pastness in the lore crafted for Spook Hill provided an attractive tension for visitors to experience.

The "Legend of Spook Hill" play marked a moment of transition, as by the 1960s the iconography of the site had entirely embraced a legendary Native American heritage connection, abandoning the tale of the African-American visitor to the site. A pamphlet printed early in that decade tells the new legend of

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Spook Hill in great detail, ascribing this new version of the lore to an “old Indian Legend,” starring a Seminole chief named Cufcowellax. The story is recounted in full:

After the Seminoles left the Cherokee nation, they settled in Central Florida away from the white man’s lodges to the North. One legendary chief settled on the lake which is now known as Lake Wailes. Here had had all the advantages of a high campsite on a lake which offered fresh water and good fishing. It was also close to Iron Mountain which, as the highest point in Florida, was sacred to the Indians’ Sun God.

The chief, Cufcowellax, and his people were happy for several years, but then one day a huge bull alligator moved into the lake and began to harass the tribe. Soon it began nightly raids on the village, and the tribe lived in terror of this evil spirit that inhabited their lake.

The Legend says that Cufcowellax was a chief of great physical prowess and courage. He had great stature among his people both as a warrior and as a ruler. When he saw his people in constant fear, the Chief, fearing for their safety, set out to conquer the evil spirit. His tribal shaman and elders placed him under the protection of the Great Spirit and he began his search.

Though many suns came and went, he could not catch the ‘gator. Finally one morning he came upon the ‘gator on the northwest shore as it dragged another night’s victim into the lake. The legend says the Chief battled the ‘gator on land and water for a moon, and then suddenly the great thrashing stopped, and the water of the lake turned red.

The tribe watched the surface of the lake in fearful anticipation. With great joy they saw their chief rise from the water. In the midst of their celebration they saw something else. The great battle had made a smaller lake near the big one. When the Chief died, he was buried on the shore of the little lake, Ticowa, and the place became sacred to the Indians.

The Indians lost their camping grounds to the encroaching white settlers. Circuit riders carrying mail between the coasts used the old trail around Lake Ticowa until they discovered that their horses were laboring *downhill*. It was they who first called the place SPOOK HILL.

Some forty years later as the area developed, the citrus industry grew. Soon the hills around Lake Ticowa were covered with citrus groves. Workers driving their wagons around the lake were startled to find their mule teams struggling *downhill* with a load.

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Years later the road was paved and residents found their cars would roll uphill by themselves. Others came to test this phenomenon, and it soon became a major attraction for visitors.²⁴

The new version of the legend of Spook Hill which emerged in the early 1960s bore no resemblance to the earlier versions told. It is quite distinct from the original tale which adorned the roadside signs placed on Spook Hill, which offered no origin for the mysterious forces which seemed to be at work on the hill. It also bears no resemblance to the story told in the 1957 “Legend of Spook Hill” play. It extends further into the past as well. While the play had focused upon a cross-cultural connection in Florida’s frontier era, the Cufcowellax version of the legend takes place in a Central Florida devoid of the influence of white European conquest, but then ties the entire history of the site together, by mentioning the frontier period and the development of the citrus industry. By configuring the Spook Hill legend in this manner, those who wrote the pamphlet attempted to make Spook Hill into a pivotal presence within local lore, portraying it as a road that had seen consistent use for almost a century. Within this context, a visitor to Spook Hill would feel as though they were traveling the same road and experiencing the same experiences as generations of Lake Wales predecessors.

Another key distinction between the Cufcowellax version of the Spook Hill legend and those which preceded it was the elements of adventure and ambiguity. The legend is told as a hero narrative, with a supremely strong, talented, and kind chief risking his life for his tribe. The tale is told in a way which elementally connects it with North Lake Wailes, identified in the story as Ticowa, which is located approximately 700 feet from the location at the Spook Hill site where cars are encouraged to stop. The land of Lake Wales itself is imbued in the story with a claim of extreme tribal significance. Whether or not these parts of the story are based upon actual Seminole myth, the narrative was designed by Lake Wales backers to give a greater significance to Spook Hill, to connect it with epic events through the ages. While predecessors such as the Captain Sarsaparilla legend had incorporated a tangible narrative with particular identified spirits doing the work at Spook Hill, the Cufcowellax legend does not make it clear whether the spirit subverting the laws of gravity at the site is that of Cufcowellax, protecting his tribe’s lands, or that of the evil alligator he had defeated. The decision about which spirit causes the Spook Hill experience, in the narrative, is left up to the reader or the visitor, allowing them to pick the most satisfying option, or to serve as a topic of discussion when information about the attraction was shared with others.

After the 1960s, the legend of Spook Hill did not gain any added significant details on material associated with the site. In fact, a web document advertising Spook Hill posted on the Lake Wales

²⁴ “An Indian Legend of Lake Wales’ Famed Spook Hill” Advertising Pamphlet, Lake Wales Museum Archives.

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Chamber of Commerce website in 2013 uses the exact same text as the 1960s pamphlet.²⁵ Signs placed at the site after the 1960s embraced the Cufcowellax version of the Spook Hill legend, though interestingly the chief's name is never mentioned on the signs. A sign which was featured on a 1960s postcard summarizes the story which had been written on the "Indian Legend of Lake Wales" promotional pamphlet. It focuses on the creation of North Lake Wailes, and on the persistence of supernatural events through the ages. It ends by again raising the ambiguity of exactly which spirit causes the strangeness of the site.²⁶ While the first decade of Spook Hill's local prominence was marked by alterations to and evolutions of its accompanying legend, the legend was essentially set in stone past the 1960s.

The Cufcowellax legend has echoed through the decades since the 1960s, with future signs changing their text very little. At the 1994 Florida Folk Festival, in White Springs, Linda Chancey, a storyteller from Bartow, told the legend of Spook Hill, basing it upon the 1960s promotional pamphlet. At the very end of the performance, she asked the audience which spirit they thought might be haunting Spook Hill. An audience member responded that they thought it was Cufcowellax. Most recently, a Halloween event at the 2010 Pioneer Days Festival in Lake Wales embraced the Spook Hill legend. Offering a haunted attraction called *Terror! On the Lake*, promotional material encourages guests to "SEE! THE SPIRITS BATTLE TO THE DEATH!" Depicting a spectral Cufcowellax overlooking a swampy lake with a menacing alligator's gaping maw in

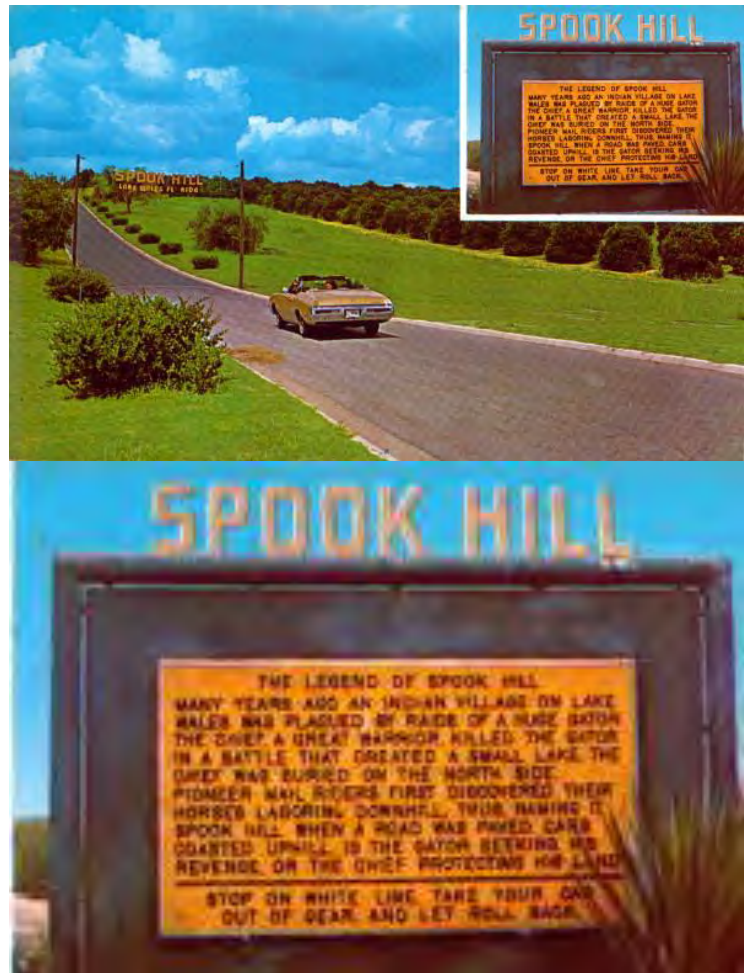


Figure 8: 1960s postcard portraying Spook Hill and displaying the first sign based upon the Cufcowellax legend. Source: Florida Memory

²⁵ "The Mystery of Spook Hill, Lake Wales, Florida," Lakewaleschamber.com, http://lakewaleschamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/mystery_of_spook_hill.pdf, Accessed November 29, 2018.

²⁶ "Spook Hill – Lake Wales, Florida," Floridamemory.com, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/163585>, Accessed November 29, 2018.

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the background, the promotional material indicated a frightful experience for visitors.²⁷ A description for the event read as follows:

Explore more than 2000 square feet of heavily themed environments as you unravel the local legend of “Spook Hill” where a great battle is said to have occurred between a Seminole Indian chief and a large gator. Legend says that these spirits still battle to this day pushing cars up the hill, now these spirits come to life right before your eyes with stunning visual effects throughout. You must help to free them and avoid the vicious attacks brought about by the angry spirit of the gator and his evil minions. You’ll venture through Victorian-era interiors from when the legend first began with the great chief as your guide. A vision quest will then lead you through a variety of shocking encounters including a walk through a gator-infested outdoor swamp, encounters with creatures of all kinds and a visit to the strange world where these evil spirits reside.²⁸

The “Terror on the Lake” Halloween attraction, decades after the Cufcowellax legend had first been printed, continued to exemplify the major tropes of the Spook Hill legend. It encased a primal battle of man versus nature, connecting the Spook Hill site and Lake Wales as a whole with heroism and valor, with a focus on the supernatural. It spanned eras, encompassing the Victorian era through the twenty-first century. The use of the Victorian era seems to be a continuation of the tradition of outright fabrication, with Lake Wales having been founded in the early twentieth century, and the story of Cufcowellax seemingly having been set a century prior. The legend of Spook Hill has existed in many forms since the site first emerged as a tourist attraction in the 1950s. The stories surrounding Spook Hill are pivotal parts of the experience of visitors at the site, printed on signs guiding visitors through their experience. The more detailed accounts presented in promotional brochures, pamphlets, plays, and haunted attractions served to imbue more meaning to the site as a place of local cultural significance. The site produced no income on its own, being a public road with no ticket booth, but local business interests consistently found ways to use the site to attempt to enhance their own revenues. Spook Hill is significant within Lake Wales as a place which inspired waves of legend-crafting, to add meaning and draw visitors to an optical illusion on a stretch of roadway.

²⁷ “Terror On the Lake” Promotional Material, 2010, Lake Wales Museum Archives.

²⁸ “Terror on the Lake – A Haunted Attraction in Lake Wales,” 2010, Eventful.com, <http://eventful.com/lakewales/events/terror-lake-haunted-attraction-/E0-001-034359802-5>, Accessed November 29, 2018.

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N/A

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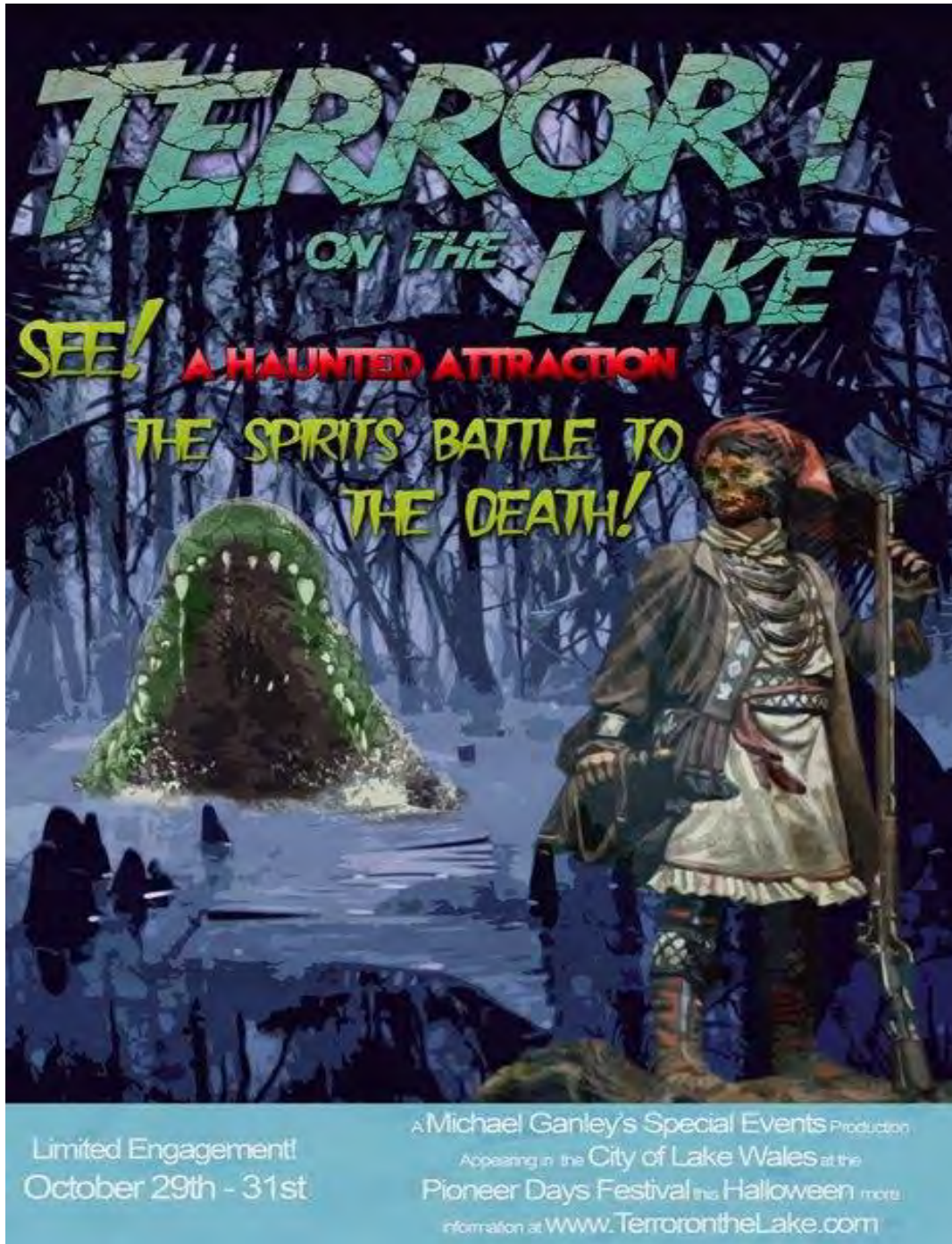


Figure 9: Promotional material for the 2010 Terror on the Lake haunted attraction at the Lake Wales Pioneer Days Festival. This event was a tangible expression of the Spook Hill legend, allowing visitors to experience the story in a new way. Source: Lake Wales Museum

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Spook Hill

Name of Property

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Spook Hill

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County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Verbal Boundary Description

North Wales Drive between Burns Avenue to the north and the northeastern driveway of Spook Hill Elementary School to the south, extending west from the public road to the property lines on either side. See attached map.

Boundary Justification

The above boundary contains all historic resources associated with Spook Hill.

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Spook Hill

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N/A

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Property Name: Spook Hill

City or Vicinity: Lake Wales

County: Polk County

State: FL

Photographer: Jennifer Nanek

Date Photographed: November 2018

Description of photograph(s) and number, including description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. Entrance to Spook Hill, Camera Facing Northeast
2. Spook Hill Legend and Instructions Sign, Camera Facing Northeast
3. Spook Hill Archway and Starting Line, Camera Facing North
4. View Down Spook Hill from Archway, Camera Facing Southwest
5. View Down Spook Hill from Burns Avenue, Camera Facing South

Spook Hill

North Wales Drive
Lake Wales, Polk County
Florida, 33853

Lat./Long. Coordinates:
27.912485, -81.582365

UTM:
17R 442694 3087602

Datum: WGS84

Legend

 Proposed NR Boundary

Date: 12/3/2018

N

1:1,500

0 62.5 125 250 Feet

0 15 30 60 Meters

Basemap Sources: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye,
Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS,
USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid,
IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS
User Community



Spook Hill

North Wales Drive
Lake Wales, Polk County
Florida, 33853

Lat./Long. Coordinates:
27.912485, -81.582365

UTM:
17R 442694 3087692

Datum: WGS84

Legend

 Proposed NR Boundary

Date: 12/4/2018

N

1:10,000

0 425 850 1,700
Feet

0 105 210 420
Meters

Basemap Source: 2013 National
Geographic Society, i-cubed



SPOOK HILL

SPOOK HILL

THE LEGEND

Once upon an INDIAN TOWN on Lake Wales Lake was plagued with raids by a HUGE GATOR.
The town's GREAT WARRIOR Chief and the gator were killed in a FURIOUS BATTLE that
created the huge swampy Depression nearby. The Chief was buried on its north side.
Later FUGITIVE RANGERS coming from the old ARMY TRAIL stop the ridge above found
their horses LADDERING HERE...at the feet of the ridge...and called it Spook Hill.
IS IT THE GATOR SEEKING REVENGE, OR THE CHIEF PROTECTING HIS LAND???

Stop car on white line, place in neutral and let it roll back.



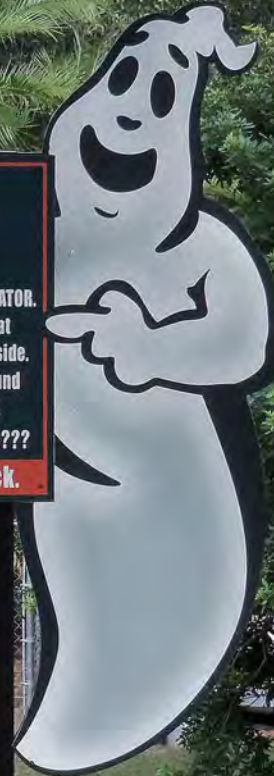
SPOOK HILL

THE LEGEND

Ages ago an INDIAN TOWN on Lake Wailes lake was plagued with raids by a HUGE GATOR. The town's GREAT WARRIOR Chief and the gator were killed in a FINAL BATTLE that created the huge swampy depression nearby. The chief was buried on its north side. Later PIONEER HAULERS coming from the old ARMY TRAIL atop the ridge above found their horses LABORING HERE...at the foot of the ridge...and called it Spook hill.

IS IT THE GATOR SEEKING REVENGE, OR THE CHIEF PROTECTING HIS LAND???

Stop car on white line, place in neutral and let it roll back.



SPOOK HILL





SPOCK HILL



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Spook Hill

Multiple Name: _____

State & County: FLORIDA, Polk

Date Received: 2/19/2019 Date of Pending List: 3/7/2019 Date of 16th Day: 3/22/2019 Date of 45th Day: 4/5/2019 Date of Weekly List: _____

Reference number: SG100003585

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review: _____

X Accept Return Reject 4/5/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: Good example of how a community created a tourist attraction from scratch, utilizing an optical illusion not uncommon in many states, and centering a tourist campaign around it. The illusion of rolling uphill can be found in many places, and in many states local legends abound, passed by word of mouth and the occasional news article. In lake Wales, local organizations pounced on the opportunity to advertise and mark the spot, part of an overall tourism strategy for the area. The "legend" of the hill evolved over time, becoming more "legendary" and more fantastic. It remains well marked and locally celebrated.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept / A

Reviewer Jim Gabbert Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

George Lindsey III
Commissioner, District 1
Chairman



330 W Church Street
Drawer BC01
P O Box 9005
Bartow, FL 33831-9005
Tel: (863) 534-6450
Fax: (863) 534-7655

GeorgeLindsey@polk-county.net

Board of County Commissioners

January 18, 2019

2019 JAN 22 A 11:33

Ruben A. Acosta, Survey & Registration Supervisor
Bureau of Historic Preservation
R. A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Spook Hill, North Wales Drive, Lake Wales, FL 33853

Dear Mr. Acosta:

Thank you for your letter of January 2, 2019 and the opportunity to comment on the nomination proposal for listing Spook Hill in the National Register of Historic Places.

Since the days of pioneer riders carrying mail in horse-drawn wagons, Spook Hill has intrigued travelers with its strange phenomenon: horses struggling downhill or, more recently, cars "rolling" uphill. Is it an illusion or, as legend has it, the unrest of an angry gator or the Seminole Chief protecting his land? A visit to Central Florida can almost be considered incomplete if it doesn't include a visit to this mind-boggling tourist attraction.

The Polk County Board of County Commissioners values the significance of historical sites and preserving the history of Polk County and endorses Spook Hill's nomination for listing in the National Register.

Thank you for your assistance in supporting this nomination. We look forward to a favorable outcome.

Sincerely,

George Lindsey, III, Chairman
County Commissioner, District One

GL/cc



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT of STATE

RON DESANTIS
Governor

LAUREL M. LEE
Secretary of State

February 12, 2019

Dr. Julie Ernstein, Deputy Keeper and Chief,
National Register of Historic Places
Mail Stop 7228
1849 C St, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Dr. Ernstein:

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for **Spook Hill (FMSF#: 8PO08149) in Polk County**, to the National Register of Historic Places. The related materials (digital images, maps, and site plan) are included.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (850) 245-6364 if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Ruben A. Acosta
Supervisor, Survey & Registration
Bureau of Historic Preservation

RAA/raa

Enclosures