

The Ghost of Fiddlers Bridge

By Craig Marshall & Viola Schoch



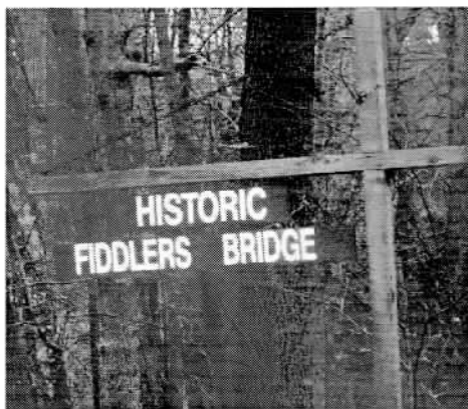
Murder! - Robbery! - Ghosts! Such is the stuff that makes for great legends, in this case, our most famous ghost legend of Clinton. The road connecting Pleasant Plains and Schultzville is named Fiddlers Bridge commemorating a tale that began in 1808. It was September 7 when an old local resident who used to play his fiddle at dances and festivals was found dead on a bridge on this narrow, winding road. Allegedly, he had been robbed and murdered on his way home after playing for a dance, and the bridge was later named Fiddlers Bridge. According to tradition, the fiddler's ghost can be heard playing the fiddle on certain moonlit evenings between 10 and midnight at the site, which no longer contains a bridge.

Long-time Society member Viola Schoch who lives on Fiddlers Bridge Road recalls an event that occurred 100 years later. She recounts:

"It seems that the town supervisor back in 1908 was my Grandma Cookingham's brother Charlie Carpenter. Grandma lived here on the hill with her husband John Calvin and their four sons. Uncle Charlie Carpenter lived in Frost Mills and earned his living as an auctioneer. There were boarding houses in Frost Mills and Pleasant Plains, and Uncle Charlie enjoyed sharing the fiddler story with those summer guests from the Big City. They said his story was just plain foolishness.

Well, Uncle Charlie would show them. A couple of nights later, September 7, 1908, exactly 100 years after the fiddler's death, he swung into action. He gathered up

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Fiddlers Bridge site marker, 0.5 mi. west of Schultz Hill Rd, north side.

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those disbelievers with his hay wagon. Some of the Plains young men went along too. They were my father Harlow Cookingham, age 23, and his brother Phil (Don Cookingham's father), age 19. I know that this is all true because my dad shared it many times with our summer house guests! When the lumber wagon approached the bridge, to the amazement of almost all, the fiddler began to fiddle with great gusto.

Oh, my, those city folk would never again object to the authenticity of the story. They'd gladly name the bridge Fiddler's Bridge. And later the Town would name the road Fiddlers Bridge Road in honor of that old fiddler. That's my tale, folks. Oh, but I almost forgot one thing about that September night in 1908. Uncle Charlie and the boys had an absolutely marvelous evening!"

(Ed. note: In 1992, Viola and Emil Schoch re-enacted the 1908 event by inviting several Society members to visit the site on their tractor-towed hay wagon in the evening. Yes, violin music was clearly heard, as played by Brenda Koepp, a senior at Rhinebeck H.S., wearing a white sheet over her head.)