

HAUNTED CANADA

The First Terrifying
Collection

PAT HANCOCK

illustrations by
Andrej Krystoforski and Kara-Anne Fraser

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RESCUE FROM THE GRAVE

Fox River, Nova Scotia

As a sea captain, George Hatfield was often away from his home at Fox River, west of Parrsboro, for months at a time. In March 1876, he was still a few weeks from home, sailing north from Cuba to Boston in stormy Atlantic waters. After a harrowing day at the helm, Hatfield decided to go below for some much-needed sleep. Soon after he nodded off, he felt a hand on his shoulder and heard someone tell him to alter his course. But when he rolled over and looked around his cabin, there was nobody there.

Hatfield figured his first mate must have left right after delivering his message, so he headed back up to the bridge to find out what was going on. When he got on deck, he found his mate at the wheel, carefully steering the ship through the treacherous waves. Hatfield asked the man

why he didn't want to follow the course that had been set, but the mate had no idea what his captain was talking about.

Hatfield felt more than a little foolish. Deciding that he must have dreamed the visitor to his cabin, he went below and stretched out on his bunk again. But once more his sleep was interrupted in exactly the same way. Angry, he went back up to ask the first mate why he wanted to change course and why he hadn't stayed to discuss the matter after waking him up. The poor mate said he hadn't left his post, nor had any other member of the crew.

Confused, Hatfield tried once more to get some rest. He had barely closed his eyes when he again felt someone tapping his shoulder and ordering him in a firm, loud voice to make a specific course change. This time, though, when the captain looked up, he saw a man he didn't recognize leaving his cabin. He jumped up and hurried back up the stairs. When he reached the first mate, he asked him if he had just seen someone walking along the deck. The mate said no. Hatfield looked around for a few seconds, then turned to the worried man and ordered him to alter the ship's course in the way the voice had described. Then the captain returned to his cabin and fell into a deep sleep.

The mate was afraid his captain might be suffering from extreme exhaustion, but he did as he was told. He was still steering the new course when Hatfield appeared back on deck the next morning, looking rested but anxious. Hatfield ordered his crew to keep a close watch on the sea ahead. A few hours later he heard a cry that he seemed to be expecting. One of his men had spotted a battered ship that appeared to be taking on water at a deadly rate.

Through a series of dangerous manoeuvres, Hatfield

and his crew managed to get close enough to the American schooner *D. Talbot* to rescue everyone on board. The schooner's captain, a man named Amesbury, was especially grateful to Hatfield. His wife and child were among those rescued.

After Amesbury and his family had dried off and had a warm drink, Hatfield sat down with them and told them how he had found them. As he was describing the strange man who had mysteriously appeared in his cabin, Mrs. Amesbury interrupted him and asked for more details about what the man looked like and what he was wearing. Then she started to cry. When Hatfield asked her what was wrong, she told him he had just described her father. In a trembling voice she went on to explain that her father had died ten years earlier.

Is it possible that Mrs. Amesbury's father cared for her so much that he'd returned from the grave to save her from certain death? Who else could have appeared to Hatfield in the middle of the Atlantic and guided him to the exact spot, in that vast ocean, where his help was needed the most?



THE PROSPECTOR'S SPECTRE

O'Brien Creek, Yukon Territory

Fred Nelson looked as if he had seen a ghost. That's because he had — just a few days earlier. Even back in the safety of Dawson, he was still filled with fear as he spoke of what had happened at the mouth of O'Brien Creek, near what came to be known as Fortymile.

A reporter with the Klondike Nugget carefully observed Nelson as he told his horrifying tale. He noted how Nelson's eyes had a wild look about them, and his hands trembled. His voice even cracked as he gave a detailed account of what he and another gold prospector, a man called Swanson, had seen and heard in a two-room cabin in the wilderness. By the time Nelson had finished his story, the reporter was convinced that it was true. No man could pretend to be that scared.

Like most people in the area back then, Nelson and Swanson had heard rumours that the cabin was haunted. It had sat abandoned for 14 years, ever since its owner, a prospector named La Salle, had been found dead there in 1886. From the bloodied state of La Salle's body, it was clear that he had been murdered. Suspicion had fallen on some Tanana men from Alaska who were fed up with the fur traders, miners and missionaries that kept invading their territory. However, there was no proof that they had killed La Salle, and no one was ever charged with the crime.

For years after La Salle's death, stories circulated about strange sounds coming from the cabin. Those few daring enough to go near it — Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike — told of being overcome by a creepy feeling as they approached the door. That weird feeling was enough to send them on their way without going inside.

But the temperature had plunged to nearly 40 degrees below zero on the evening that Nelson and Swanson spotted the cabin in the distance. Faced with the very real possibility of freezing to death, they decided to take shelter in it and hope for the best. They were nervous when they went inside, but once they got a small fire going in the old stove, they felt much calmer. Eventually they fell asleep.

At first Nelson thought it was the howl of the wind that woke him up around midnight. But as he rolled over to get comfortable, he heard the sound again. It wasn't the wind and it wasn't coming from outside. It was the sound of someone moaning and it was coming from the back room. Swanson was awake by then. He had heard the moans too.

Nelson jumped up and pushed on the door connecting

the two rooms, but even though it had swung open freely earlier, it was now stuck. Swanson rammed it with his shoulder, but it wouldn't budge. At that point Nelson thought he heard a low voice weakly pleading for help. As he pulled on his parka, he shouted at Swanson to keep trying to open the door. Then he jammed his feet into his boots and headed outside.

Nelson ran around the side of the cabin, intending to break the small window in the back room. But when he got to it, it was filled with an eerie light. Looking inside he saw the misty apparition of a man with a horrible gash on the side of his head. Petrified, Nelson stumbled back into the cabin and, nearly choking with fear, told Swanson what he had seen.

Swanson backed away from the door, no longer wanting to open it. But the moans grew louder, so he edged nearer and, in a loud voice, told whatever was in the room to identify itself. Over the next several minutes, he asked questions and got patterns of knocks in reply. When Swanson asked if the phantom was La Salle's ghost, the knocks got louder, and when he asked the spirit who had killed him, the door suddenly burst open. Filling the doorway was the glowing image of a man, his arms stretched upwards. Both Swanson and Nelson screamed, but before they could make it outside, the figure vanished.

Both prospectors managed to find the courage to stay in the cabin long enough to pack up their gear. Then they slipped out into the darkness, preferring to take their chances with the deadly cold rather than spend another minute in the shelter of La Salle's cabin.