

Common Mystics Podcast

Season 2 Episode 17: Escape to Freedom in McGraw, NY

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00:00:09 On this episode of Common Mystics, we traveled to midstate New York where this country's original sin still echoes through the hillside. I'm Jennifer James. I'm Jill Stanley. We're psychics. We're sisters. We are Common Mystics. We find extraordinary stories in ordinary places, and today we have a story for you out of McGraw, New York. Okay. Our sister Jessica lives in McGraw. She does. And she was hosting us for my birthday weekend. Now, she has told us many times, she's like, you guys, it's so haunted here. And we're like, yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, nothing she could have said could have prepared me for this creepy ass, little village of McGraw, and believe me, I say that with love and admiration. True. Like nothing like I've ever experienced. This was something special. So before we get into all that, there is a notable correction that I have to make because I do not pronounce things or read things correctly. Dear Tiyi, I am very sorry. I mispronounced your name. You are an author, a wonderful human being all the way around. And thank you so much for supporting our show. You and your husband are delightful. And I'm asking all of you folks listening out there to check out "Ghost Stories With Spooky Ms Tiyi," on Facebook. She's amazing. Yay. Thank you so much, Tiyi. We love you. Thank you. We love you. Now Jen, back to the show.

00:01:45 So, McGraw, New York. Wait, do you want me to talk a little bit about what it's like? Well, can you talk about what Jessica and Adam did for my birthday first? Oh my gosh. They made it so special. You guys, it was like, she made her house a hotel for us. She did. And we did those cool paper lanterns at night where you light a little votive and then they rise up into the sky. It was really nice. And then, um, they had this Ichabod blow-up like, Halloween decoration that they put, they had going for me because they know I like spooky stuff and it was really, really sweet. So, thank you guys so much. It was very special. It was legit very special.

00:02:25 The only thing that I have to say is there was a smoky mofo also staying in the house and it was like choking me out because I was already sick before we got there. You were sick, like your face was half swollen. Your eye was bloodshot. You were a mess. That's totally fair. She's not exaggerating, and there are no pictures of me from that trip. Right, on purpose. Um, oh yeah, for sure. Yeah. So we were staying and it was so nice in the house. They made it so special, but there were some smokers hanging out in the house and you were already not feeling well, and so I could just sense like, we needed to get you some air. Yes.

00:03:01 So, you guys, you know Jennifer by now. So, I'm not feeling well, and she's like, all up on my shit, like pulling me out of the house making sure I'm okay. She's like, holding my arm walking down the street. If I didn't look like her very large, handicapped little sister, then I looked like her very large lover cause she was like, all up on me. And so I'm like, okay. So we get out of Jessica's house, [that's fair] and we see a little stream and a bridge and that's the direction we take. It's gorgeous. Yeah.

00:03:30 Uh, so pretty. Yeah. I want to say it's stone. It's like a concrete, little bridge [it's beautiful] and the trickling brook. Just so lovely. And we turn around and we're walking down the street and all of a sudden we're like, where are we?

00:03:48 As soon as I started feeling well, I was like, Jen, I'm good. I'm good. Just shook me loose. I was like, I'm all right, and then I'm like, holy F. I was like, this whole place is haunted.

It's not like there was a haunted building. It looked like there were eyes on or felt like there were eyes on us from every direction and angle.

00:04:09 You had a great analogy for this. So, you know when Dorothy's house lands in Oz and she walks out in Technicolor and she is walking around in amazement and she knows that there are some things or some people or persons that she can't see that are watching her, and it turns out to be the munchkins. That's exactly how this felt.

00:04:34 Exactly. But nothing cute came out. I don't think the munchkins are cute. I think they're kind of creepy. I think some of them are. All right. We'll talk about that later. The ones with the lollipops? I was into it. I was like, give me a lollipop and dance with me. I would have been all happy.

00:04:51 Anyway, the point is we were walking down the street and it was still, and it was quiet and it felt like eyes were on us. And it felt like whomever was watching us, expected us. Like, like they were waiting for us to arrive.

00:05:08 And knew like, who we are and what we were doing there. It was super creepy. So, we got scared and we're like, we're going back to Jessica's house. I don't care if that kid's smoking. I was like, we're there. And that was before we even got our spook on. It's true. We weren't even working quote unquote on the podcast that day.

00:05:28 That is not okay. So tell me about this creepy ass, little village, Jen. Well, a little bit of description for the people out there who maybe aren't familiar with this creepy ass little village. It is. [And again, we say it with love.] We love you, McGraw. It's mostly an agricultural area. First of all, in Cortland County, about four miles east of the city of Cortland. Some people call it upstate New York. Other people call it mid-state, but we are talking about the Finger Lake region. And again, not dirty.

00:05:58 Not dirty. No. It's located in a valley, in fact, and surrounded by hills on all sides. And there's a brook called the Trout Brook that flows through the area. So, after we retreated to the safety of Jessica's haunted house, because her house too is haunted, Jen and I started looking up the history of McGraw a little bit. Can you tell me a little bit about the history of McGraw? Sure.

00:06:24 Just very briefly. It was settled around 1806 and named after Samuel McGraw, who was one of the very first settlers. McGraw was incorporated in 1869. It was actually, and this is really important, Jill. McGraw was the home to New York Central College, which was an institution that was founded by Free Baptists in 1849. Mm,

00:06:54 Okay. I heard of Baptists. I don't know any free ones. I don't understand that, but go on. New York Central College was notable because half of its students were African-American. That is crazy, in 1849.

00:07:11 In 1849, you have an integrated college. That's major. A hundred years later, you wouldn't have that in most places. So, that is nuts. Unfortunately, there was a smallpox epidemic that would bring about the college's closure in 1860, along with the social and political opposition to their progressive ways, that would also lead to a closing.

00:07:36 Okay. So tell me about the Baptists. I've heard of Baptists, like the religion, but what is Free Baptist? Why, why are they free?

00:07:46 Right. Free refers to their stance on anti-slavery. Okay. Right. So, they were anti-slavery Baptists in McGraw, who supported and pretty much ran the New York Central College, and the prominent feature of the New York Central College was its anti slavery, it's

radical, anti-slavery position, and also equality of the sexes and also, um, their stance on Native Americans. [Wow] And, um, there were actually Native Americans that attended that college as well. So, very, very progressive. So natives, women, men, people of color. Wow. 1849.

00:08:31 I know, but sadly, they only lasted about 11 years, but still that's something that's something to be said for the, you know, the social and political views at the time in McGraw.

00:08:40 So, now we are officially going to start working, and we leave Jessica's house. So, please set the intention for us as we leave Jess's

00:08:48 As our intention always is, we were looking to find a story that we had no prior knowledge of, but also to give voice to the voiceless. That's right, and so using our spidey senses, we come upon the McGraw Rural Cemetery, just north of Main Street, and as we're heading on Cemetery Street towards the cemetery, I tell you, and you write in the notebook, "Jill - she says, it feels like a railroad town." I was also, well, we get into the cemetery and I'm snapping pictures. I'm walking around. Hell, I don't know where you were, but I was feeling like an organization, like a factory and industry. And then I heard you calling for me. What, what was going on with you? Well, I got scared because I was hearing someone calling for their daughter. My daughter, my daughter. So I got scared and I was like, Jill, where are you? Anyway...

00:09:46 And, so I was still feeling on the industry spilling over. It felt like it was expanding, splintering off, and you were walking around very close to me. And you were picking up what? The idea of, um, an old religious group, such as the Quakers, and I actually wrote down Quakers. That was the image that was coming into my head.

00:10:09 Like the oats, the Quaker Oats guy? Well, not the Quaker Oats guy. I mean he's hot and all, but no, I was just thinking like the Quaker group. You do like strong looks. Okay. He does have a strong look. So I was picking up on [he's no James Beckwourth, though] That's true.

00:10:28 That's true. He wears shorter pants than the Crow leggings. Okay. So I was picking up on and help me here. I don't know what cartoon this is from, but I was seeing in my mind's eye that this lanky wolf whistling, wearing overalls with his hands in his pockets. Do you know what I'm talking about?

00:10:50 The whistling that tune <inaudible> yeah. What it was, it was giving me the feeling like he was, like hiding something. Pretending that he wasn't up to anything. Right. He was being nonchalant. Uh huh.

00:11:12 And I was feeling that there were a lot of lives that were missing or lost. And you are bringing me down because I was feeling like poetry and feeling like, music. And you're just like, people died everywhere. And I was like, Jesus.

00:11:27 I know. I know. So we get back in the car and we're headed down towards Main Street again, and as we're driving, I kept hearing this name Coffey, his name was like, Coffey or something. So you wrote down in the notebook, as I was driving, "Jill- Coffey" That'll come up later, but, so now we're on Main Street and we see a historical marker, and what did we learn from season one, Coal City?

00:11:54 You always have to read the historical markers. So, that's what we did. So, that's what we did. So it's the, the sign is like right on the street, and it's in a parking lot, basically between two churches. So, we pulled into the parking lot and we parked and we got out and we read the sign and I'm going to read you what at least two different signs said. "It was the old Baptist cemetery, 1820 to 1864. First cemetery in McGrawville." So, that piqued our interest a

little bit. Because I thought that we were in the first cemetery. We were in the McGraw Rural Cemetery, which some old ass graves are in. So, this was quite the surprise,

00:12:36 Right? Because we had just come from what we thought was the oldest. So anyway, so we're standing in a parking lot and reading the sign and I'm going to read it here. "The old Baptist Cemetery lies between two churches, McGraw United Methodist Church, and the McGrawville Baptist Church in the village of McGraw. This was the first community cemetery in McGrawville now known as McGraw. Its first burial took place in 1820, with the final burial occurring in 1864. A 1986 National Register of Historic Places form from McGraw's Main Street Historic District remarks that the cemetery is only one acre in size despite approximately 125 to 150 burials. It also details that graves found in the cemetery were marked by flat sandstone and marble headstones as was common during the 1850s. Sadly, many of the headstones have been lost over the years with few still standing." Okay.

00:13:40 So I have a couple of questions because we are standing in a parking lot in between the two churches and there is not a cemetery anywhere. There is not a cemetery there. And they're supposed to be like 150 people in like, one acre.

00:13:53 Yeah. Which means like, densely buried, dead. That shit is concentrated. Aha. Aha. So, uh, so we're confused. We're like, well, where's the, where's the cemetery. We are literally between the churches and there's a parking lot. So, where's the cemetery?

00:14:11 So, we go huntin'. We use our... we go dead hunting. Well, hunting the dead. Yeah, we're going on a dead hunt. So, we turn up our Spidey's on full blast, and we like, go just right between trees and there lies the creepiest, and I know I'm using this word a lot, but I cannot describe the site that we saw when we walked through those trees. Jennifer, for the love of God.

00:14:36 We see so many cemeteries, Jill, and yet we've never seen anything like this. Jennifer. What? We frequent all kinds of cemeteries, like that's what we do. That, that, that's how we roll. That's where you find me, hit me up at the cemetery. This cemetery? Oh my God. Please describe. Well, forget about the fact that obviously the stones are super old and they're like growing up into the trees, okay?

00:15:03 Yeah. Like that is creepy AF. Yeah. But right in the center of this little cemetery are the old headstones, which somebody, or some people have taken and arranged in a mosaic grid pattern in the center. Like they laid them down like some creepy ass patio.

00:15:28 Like some dominoes from hell. That's not right. And it almost looked like a stage to me. That's not right. I would take it a step further and say altar [don't say that] but you know what I'm saying? Don't say that. I'm just telling you how it looked. I have a lot of pictures of it. You're going to have to post that because you will, you will not believe it. Like why?

00:15:50 Why? It doesn't make sense. It does not make sense. Why would you do that? Because you know, you moved them away from where the people were buried.

00:15:58 Right. Even if they fell, then they fell by where the person was. Right, you leave them where they are, so you know where the body is in the general vicinity of the stone. Now, that stone marks nothing. And what kind of sick [I know] I just don't get it.

00:16:13 So again, we retreat to the car and back to Jessica's house. We're like, screw all this. McGraw's haunted as fuck. There was a creepy ass cemetery. We're going back to Jessica's. I can't take it anymore. This town got the best of us. I did not see this coming. So we were driving.

00:16:30 I'm actually driving this time. I'm sick. My face is swollen. I'm a mess. I looked like Sloth from The Goonies. I don't remember that reference. You don't remember Sloth from The Goonies? Look it up. I'll wait. Just suffice to say you were like [like, you need to look it up right now.] crusty and slimy at the same time. If you do not look it up, I'm going to look it up. Are you serious? Jennifer right now. Oh my God. What is it? What am I looking up?

00:16:58 Sloth from The Goonies. Like the animal sloth? That's how you'd spell it? All right. Sloth. Goonies. I was swollen. One eye was there. That's fair. I'm not even kidding. You looked exactly like that. I'm saying. Thank you for that visual. I was like, you need to look this up.

00:17:25 Oh Lord. All right. So we're in the car. I'm driving, for once, and Jill, you were seeing an image.

00:17:33 In my mind's eye. I was seeing like logger trucks or like big cut trees, like big cut logs, like huge. Like a big pile of logs. Yes. And we're going down the street. Um, a couple, like a block down, and all of a sudden we see that image on the right hand side on this dead end street and the street was called Center Street. So I was like Jen [Center Street, right] I was like, Jennifer, you need to turn around. And Jennifer did not go EEEER [ties screeching sound]. She pulled into a parking lot and she put the car into reverse. Then checked both directions before making a left back onto the main road and then proceeding to Center Street.

00:18:14 Yeah. So you're, you're quite funny, quite funny. Although I did surprise you with my driving skills when we were in Utah. You guys, she almost killed us. twice. Anyway, that's a story for another time. She literally almost killed us twice. Okay. Anyway, I was actually impressed. I was like, God damn. She's into it today. .

00:18:32 I made a three point turn. I made a three point turn and turned around, but the point is, so we turn onto Center Street and there is, I was really impressed with this, there is a huge log pile, just like you said you were seeing in your head. That's crazy, Jill. And across. Go for it. Say it. You. You. You. You.

00:18:53 Across the street, there was this creepy ass abandoned building from like, the turn of the century, if not older. And it was calling to me, it was like, Jill, come check me out. And it looked like a big factory with like, an adjoining factory that was built on later. And so I was, you guys? I was into it. I was all in. I was getting into that building because it needed me. And so I'm walking around. Jennifer's like, hey Jill. Hey Jill. The voice of reason. I'm like, hold on, Jennifer. And I'm like, Jill,

00:19:29 And I'm like, Jill, don't go over there. It's collapsing. She's like trying to break into a building that is half collapsed. You were, you literally were trying to get into that building, that's back was like, collapsing.

00:19:42 So I'm approaching the building. I don't know if I'm going to go in it. I'm just really intrigued. I like architecture. I had you in my sight of vision in case I needed to call 9 1 1. And like, we're quiet. And I'm like Jennifer. And then all of a sudden we hear. A knock from inside the building.

00:20:05 And then I'm like, Jennifer, did you hear that? And I said, yeah, I heard it. Get away from the building. And I was like, shh, shhh, shhh. (knocking) I was like, nope. I'm done here. I was like, I got you. I was like, you're haunted. It's cool. You do, you, I'm just going to go back to this car. I was like, I get it. It's fine. Be haunted. That's cool. No disrespect to you.

00:20:30 So, Jennifer, we get back to the car and Jennifer's doing this like, she's pulled the seatbelt too quick, so it's like, not going over her. And I'm like, come on, come on.

00:20:43 You know when you pull it too quick, and it catches. Jesus, help me. So, we retreat back to Jessica's house, all shaky and like, holy fuck. So we get there, and we discovered that that building was an old Corset and Box Factory. Old Corset and Box Factory. Jennifer? What? That old building was owned by Mr. McGraw. It was like his building. Can you tell me a little bit about Mr. McGraw and about his building and how it came to be? Yes.

00:21:20 Absolutely. Well, Mr. McGraw that you're referring to is Perrin H. McGraw or a P.H. McGraw, who happened to be the grandson of the Sam McGraw, who was one of the first settlers of the area. So this was his grandson. That's right. He was formally educated, Perrin was, and at the age of 22, went into business with his father. Um, they were in business together until the time of his father's death in 1849. And then Perrin became the leading partner in this firm, which they had established until 1857.

00:21:56 And in 1857, they sold the company to, I think the Miller Corset Company, but go on from there. Yeah, I think it was sold in 1857. Perrin wasn't just a successful, uh, merchant and entrepreneur. However, he was also in politics and in fact, he was a Senator for the state of New York, and he identified with a political party known as the Whigs. W H I G S. Okay.

00:22:31 Okay. Um, the Whig party would cease to exist in 1854, but Senator McGraw, then identified as a Republican. Um, he had very sound conservative views on questions of state and national character. Um, also Senator McGraw was married. He had several children with her and he also enlisted as a volunteer in the New York Infantry Volunteers during the Civil War.

00:23:03 And he was like 40, at the time. So, as a 40 year old, I'm telling you right now, my knees wouldn't take that. I'd be like, you boys have fun. Yeah. He would be honorably discharged in 1862, and he would pass away in 1899. So, he lived a nice long life. Perrin McGraw.

00:23:26 So, the Whig party, um, seems like we need to know a little bit more about them because intuitively it sounds like it's connected to our story. So tell me a little bit about the Whigs.

00:23:35 So, the Whig party was a political party that was formed in 1834 by opponents of president Andrew Jackson and the Jacksonian Democrats. You know what? He was such a dick. So, yeah, I would be a Whig. So, remember we just had this conversation about judging people unfairly out of their historical context? This would be one of those times. [The Whig party-] This would be one of those times

00:23:58 The Whig party to like, burn Jefferson, or to burn Jackson, would be like, King Jackson. Who's all gonna follow him? We fought a war to get rid of a king. He's just running the place. He's just being all, all king-like,

00:24:10 Right, exactly. And so the Whig party was made up of people like abolitionists and those against the harsh treatment of the Native Americans, that Andrew Jackson was kind of famous for.

00:24:24 When, in doubt, I'm telling you, there's always a story for the Natives. Were the Whigs, were they anti-slavery? They seem like they would have been. You said abolitionist. Yeah. Yeah.

00:24:35 Well, the Whigs weren't technically anti-slavery, but if you were an abolitionist and you were going to join one of the two major parties at the time, one being the Democrats and one being the Whigs, um, abolitionists would absolutely have more common with the Whig party

than the pro-slavery Jacksonian Democrats. And by the way, Jackson was a vocal proponent, proponent of slavery, and he personally owned about 160 enslaved people.

00:25:04 Like I said, dick. Okay. I really can't argue with that. Yeah. So, what happened to the Whigs? I like them. I do. I feel like this is my party. What happened to them? You like the Whigs?

00:25:15 Yeah, for sure. In 1854, basically anti-slavery Whigs spun off and formed the Republican party and Abraham Lincoln would then become the country's first Republican president.

00:25:29 Hold it together. Hold it together. I know. I love him so much. Jennifer, okay. So, the Corset and Box Factory that we were led to by spirit was owned by, um, Perrin McGraw. Yes. A notable Whig and anti-slavery abolitionist, progressive person. Why that factory? Why were we led there?

00:25:50 Okay. So here's a connection. I want you to follow me here. I'm following. So, we were at a location of the Corset and Box Factory owned by Perrin McGraw, but that location wasn't the first location of this manufacturing center. Tell me.

00:26:10 The first location was actually on Church street, not Center street, where we were. At the Church street location, which had been a school owned by the New York Central College. Remember that progressive college that I told you? Yeah. Yeah. The one funded by the Free Baptists?

00:26:30 That's right. The Free Baptists. Who, again, abolitionists. I'm following. So, this school that was affiliated with the New York Central College was a school for quote unquote Negro children to educate them. And according to some sources, this very building, which was a school and then would be housing the Corset and Box Factory was according to some sources, a stop on the Underground Railroad.

00:27:03 Ooh, goosebumps, goosebumps. Okay. So Jennifer, I mean, I'm sure all of us have heard about the Underground Railroad. Well, maybe not. We're in a lot of different countries now. People are listening to us, really around the globe. So please tell me. How might you describe the Underground Railroad and how it worked?

00:27:24 Well. um, this is according to Jennifer because I did not have time to look this up. So I'm just going to give you my general knowledge based on my American education and please pipe in at any time. So the Underground Railroad was a secret network of people who were organized in trying to help and enslaved people from the Southern states to essentially run away to the north, through the Northern states, into Canada. Okay. Why Canada? A very good question. Because there is this thing called the Fugitive Slave Act, which was a law that said, even if you were a person in the north, it made you, by law, responsible for returning the enslaved person who was considered to be merchandise, back to their owner in the south.

00:28:24 And if not, if you didn't, you would be culpable of stealing. Yeah. It'd be against the law. Absolutely. You would be imprisoned for up to six months and pay up to \$1,000 fine in the 1850s. Well, somebody did her research. I sure did.

00:28:44 Not just a pretty face, Right. So, that's how they, that's why they needed to get into Canada and to a completely different country where the Fugitive Slave Act and other unfair laws were not in place. Why are they calling it the Underground? Because if you are part of this network, it was a secret network. It wasn't something that was written about or published about. And in fact, in order to share information about where places were safe to go and, you know,

places to stop, it was all communicated via like songs, and like quilts, that people would, you know, put out. Um, and the quilts, if you've ever seen a quilt, you know, it has a lot of different symbols on there. And the symbols would actually, [patchwork] yes, the symbols would a lot of times, um, be a map and would give directions to the runaway enslaved people, helping get, you know, from safe house to safe house until they were able to escape the country north to Canada.

00:29:46 Okay. We need a recap, because there's so many things that we just talked about. We're in McGraw. We are in McGraw. It's creepy, like the whole town is creepy. And it turns out that the town itself has a tradition of abolitionists, social and political, progressive ideas. And we are being led around this town to like the spookiest of places, right? Right. We end up at the McGraw factory, which is an analogy, I think, for the original building on Church street, which doesn't exist anymore. Right.

00:30:24 But which is known to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad, where enslaved peoples would have hidden and been helped on their way north to Canada. Oh my gosh. Okay. What are you spelling out for me here? Because I feel like I'm missing it. Tell me.

00:30:42 Well, I think that Perrin McGraw was likely a conductor on the Underground Railroad, the terminology, I've been doing a lot of research about this, the terminology is actually Station Master on the Underground Railroad. I know. I'm into it, man. I'm deep into this rabbit hole of the Underground Railroad. He was a Station Master. And what does that mean? That means that he was harboring enslaved people until they were able to get to their next stop. It was all about timing. And he would have done that at some risk. Yeah.

00:31:17 Yeah. Oh absolutely. He would have done it in secret. He would have done it at some risk and he could have very well bought that building because it was used when I say that building the original Corset Factory, because it was used in that way.

00:31:30 Well, this is all a psychic conjecture on our part, Jill. It's not though. Oh, tell me, do you have some historical facts that will back this up? As a matter of fact, I do. It's just contradictory to what the actual historian in the McGraw Historical Society had to say, which I found really shocking. So first there is a book, and the book's called, "The Underground Railroad Tales with Routes through the Finger Lake Regions." Again, not sexual. And on the back of the book, there is an illustration and the illustration is of a cave, or not a cave, it's of a tunnel with someone helping a slave pass through the tunnel. And the caption of this illustration is slaves escaping to Smith Creek via the 17 foot tunnel, McGraw, New York. Shut up. The book was by Emerson Klees and the illustration by Dru Wheelin.

00:32:36 Shut up. There's more. Tell. Jen, there's more. Again, there isn't any actual historical documents that we can muster to say, yes, see, this is part of the Underground Railroad, but notably the McGraw School District, McGraw schools.org says that McGraw was chosen as a suitable location, like we said earlier as a direct route through to Canada via the Underground Railroad, and that's why they chose McGrawville as the place to establish that reformatory institution, the Central [New York Central College] Thank you.

00:33:17 So you're saying New York Central College chose McGrawville at the time because of its tradition of helping enslaved people escape to Canada.

00:33:27 Wow. And I have one more mic drop a moment. Hold onto your seats because I went deep on this. There is a descendant from P.H., Perrin, Senator McGraw that has a, or had written a blog posting in The Cooperative Living. And the post was about how it is to be from

both sides of the Mason Dixon line. She had a great granddaddy fighting for the Confederates and she had a great granddaddy, Perrin McGraw fighting in the 157th, New York infantry during the Civil War. Not only that, but in 1855 for the sole purpose of halting and abolishing slavery, McGraw conducted slaves, runaway slaves through McGrawville to Canada along the Underground Railroad that is quoted from his great granddaughter's blog posts in Cooperative Living. Wow. So it is oral history in her family that he used, whatever means available to him to help enslaved people through the Underground Railroad that went through McGrawville.

00:34:41 And can I just say, I really liked the word granddaddy and I don't think I use it enough. You should start. You should start. So Jill, who is the voiceless in this story? The Natives, just kidding. I'm telling you, it's always the Natives.

00:35:01 Okay. Who is the voiceless? The voiceless of course, P.H. McGraw. Senator McGraw. Of course, Perrin. Right. But also I think the town itself doesn't have a notable history in the history books like Syracuse, New York does for an example, as being like this, this notable spot with tunnels that McGraw isn't like that at all.

00:35:27 Well, hold on. Why does Perrin need a voice here? Let's go back to that for a minute. Okay. Perrin needs a voice here because there are notable abolitionists that risked everything to help people go travel through the Underground Railroad, that wrote books and stuff about it, and Perrin McGraw is not one of them. He was very quiet. His colleagues in the Senate at the time, and the House Legislator of New York were like, would be like, he's like notably quiet. He didn't have to have the floor for a long time. He was like an understated man. Okay. And so he never, he would never like, boast about this.

00:36:05 Now, the whole town, Jill? You want to give voice to the whole town because nobody knows that it was a notable place where the Underground Railroad was, um, was alive and well, is that what you're thinking? That's what I'm thinking, and I'm going to take it a step further on the McGraw side. I feel like it possibly could have been generational in the McGraw family, helping people. And I'll tell you why, and this is the coolest thing. Helping people escape slavery? Yes.

00:36:33 Ooh, because that name, Coffey, that I picked up on the car. Yeah? I shit you not, I am listening to a book on Audible, not a sponsor, but we're into it. Audible, hook it up. "Bound For Canaan, the Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America". Right. Okay. In the book, one of the features or one of the figures in the book, historical figures is a Levi Coffey. And he was known as the President of the Underground Railroad. His home was known as Grand Central Station because he organized and helped get 3000 or more enslaved people on through to Canada.

00:37:20 So the fact that you pulled that name Coffey out of your head in the car? So I pulled the name Coffey, I said, but the actual guy that, that is the President, or was known unofficially as the President of the Underground Railroad has a similar name. Totally similar name. Yeah. Yeah. That's crazy. Like legit, like that's crazy. And was the President of the Underground Railroad.

00:37:50 Unofficially called the President of the Underground Railroad, establishing more than 3000 fugitives to pass through on their way in his care to Canada. That's crazy. So basically, major breadcrumbs that this really happened.

00:38:07 Well, major breadcrumb for two reasons, major breadcrumb because we're in this, like, scary little place and we're picking up on what seems to be Underground Railroad vibes,

but I can't find any research on it. Right. It was like weeks. And I was frustrated for weeks trying to figure out this outline because I wasn't getting anything on it. And then when we're going through it, I was thinking today, I'm like, is this enough? Is this enough? Do we have enough here? And then I was taking a walk with Bug, the Beagle, and, and then I was listening and he said, the Audible book guy pronounces his name as if it's Coffer or very close to it. So I was like, holy shit. So I got home and I Googled it real quick, like right before we recorded, like 15 minutes before we recorded. And it's like, oh my God. So yeah.

00:38:55 Yeah, validation. Yeah. Like, this right. This is right. I am amazing for that, too. Like, oh my God, that's a hard ass name just to pick out. It's nuts. Okay. Okay. Why is this town so creepy. Jill?

00:39:08 I love your theory on this. Tell me. You told me in your research, you found out that the town has been a site of a lot of natural disasters over the years, correct? Yeah. Like notable, like every year there is flooding and not just flooding, there had been, like, deep flash floods.

00:39:25 Right. So do you remember that tunnel that you were talking about? And we have that illustration of it that came from that book. I believe that there were enslaved people hiding in that tunnel during a flash flood, and I think many of them died. Oh my God.

00:39:46 I think that, I believe that that happened. I think that's why I was picking up on many lives lost, many lives missing. And if you think about the words that I wrote down in the notebook, lost and missing, those are like words that describe someone who is maybe dead, but also who ran away. Those enslaved people were lost and missing, right. Lost to their owners. Wow. So, also my daughter, my daughter

00:40:17 That just makes my heart hurt. I think someone's daughter died that way, underground in a flash flood, under the city of McGraw.

00:40:26 Jennifer? What? The origins of the Underground Railroad at its very meager beginnings in the 1700s was started by and is credited to one, Isaac T Hopper, and he was a Quaker.

00:40:46 Shut up. I said Quakers. A Quaker started the Underground Railroad? Holy crap. Jill, one of the first things you said about McGraw was that it felt like a railroad town. I know it makes so much more sense now because it was an Underground Railroad town. That's insane.

00:41:07 What about, um, organizations, industry expanding? It's the corset industry. What about your image of that cartoon Wolf whistling? Like he's not up to anything, but really is up to something?

00:41:22 Like nothing to see here. Right? Move it along. What do you think that means? Like, Well, that's what that means. Like he was showing me, like it's a perfect analogy. Like there's nothing to see here. Move it along. That's the vibe I got.

00:41:37 It's kind of like the old Baptist cemetery. The sign is there. You can't see it. Shut up. Shut up your metaphor making mouth. Shut up.

00:41:48 Because the sign is there, but all there is, is a paved parking lot. And then the row of trees. You wouldn't even know that that cemetery was there. If you didn't go digging for it, if you didn't go looking behind the trees, otherwise it's just paved over looking like nothing is there at all. And that is an exact metaphor for the town. That's so true. The history of the Underground Railroad, there is nothing to see here. Yeah. But we knew. Yeah, for sure. We knew. And there are serious vibes in McGraw, man. Seriously..

00:42:24 It's literally like, the creepiest little town. Jessica was not lying. Like, yeah. New York is haunted alright. Well, we'll have to go back. I'm afraid. Okay. We'll go back. Okay. So thank you guys for listening. We love you, McGraw. It's an amazing little place and seriously, you guys check out McGraw and in Cortland, just four miles to the west, there is the best Korean beef restaurant like legit. Really good. So check out your spirits, go eat the beef.

00:42:56 All right, Jill. Tell the people where they can find us.

00:42:58 Well, check out our website, www.commonmystics.net. Follow us on Instagram, Facebook and our Twitter feed at Common Mystics pod. Listen in on wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts

00:43:10 And go to Apple pods and leave us a positive review. We love reading them or just click five stars. Yeah. Tell your friends. And don't forget to check out Ghost Stories with Spooky Tiyi. Goodnight, everybody. Goodnight.