

Stratford History - "Melonheads"

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Stratford Historical Society's
UPDATE

This is the time of year when our minds are turned to Stratford hauntings. In Stratford, that usually means the Phelps Mansion where knives and tables inexplicably flew through the air in 1865. Less well known, perhaps, are the stories of the ghostly face that appears in the upstairs window of the Boothe mansion, or the apparitions that wander at leisure in St. Michael's cemetery.

If, however, you grew up in Stratford in the late 50's, 60's, or 70's, and, you had reason to camp overnight at Roosevelt Forest, you may recall tales of the never seen, but death-dealing, "melonheads" who frequent the Forest at night.

It's uncertain when tales of melonheads first became part of Roosevelt Forest folklore, but the tales seem to date back to the late 1960's. The melonhead stories have several varied origins.

One origin story tells of some "extra-Puritanical" Puritans who self-exiled themselves from New Haven.

Over time, this religiously extra-conservative group produced offspring with melon shaped heads either through inbreeding or Hydranencephaly (also known as "water on the brain").

Another origin story springs from the mental institution in Newtown where a fire in 1960 produced a diversion permitting inmates to escape. Escapees from the asylum setup camp in the woods of southwestern Connecticut existing on forest creatures, and, the occasional human. Their descendants were marked by melon shaped heads.

A third origin story traces to Trumbull where a family accused of witchcraft sought refuge in the woods of Trumbull, and, over time, produced off-spring with melon shaped heads.

However the melonheads came into existence, they chose several towns throughout the greater New Haven area in which to settle. In Stratford, the melonheads "put down roots" in Roosevelt Forest. The melonheads, due to their unsettling appearance, keep hidden during the day and



only come out after dark to prey on unsuspecting Roosevelt Forest night-time visitors.

Traditionally, the melonheads have plagued the Boy Scout camps of Roosevelt Forest. Before the Boy Scout camp was located at its current location, the camp was located nearer to Beaver Dam Road. At either location, the melon heads are rumored to haunt, sometimes murder, unsuspecting, inattentive campers. Beware all ye who enter there!