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Don't say no so quickly because—photographically speaking—you may be looking at one right now. Perhaps three of them. Note the picture of the graveyard on this page. See something odd?

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The story begins in downtown Hartford, shifts to the Connecticut State Library on Capitol Ave., and winds up in Windham County. We were having another java session with the Oldtimer at the old haunt (rather appropriate word that, in a story like this) when the conversation veered around to ghosts.

After a deep puff at his cigar, our companion asked:

"By the way, did you ever see a ghost?"

No, we replied, we never had.

"Would you like to?"

Yes, we answered, somewhat startled. That is, providing we didn't have to stay over night in a haunted house.

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**WE WERE** at the State Library in no time. Seems that Harry Chase, a colorful Windham County character, visited the library not so long ago and left his "ghost picture," as he termed it, with Miss Case who heads the local history department. The obliging Miss Case dug into her archives and showed us the unique photo, herewith reproduced. "You'll have to get the details from Mr. Chase," she said. "He lives in Pomfret."

Seen at the Chase homestead in Pomfret Center where he was born 53 years ago, Harry Chase, a gardener by trade and related to the Connecticut Chases of copper and brass fame, proved a most delightful and informative host. We soon heard the story of Pomfret's "Lost Settlement," the mystic brook of the childish voices, and the haunted graveyard—the so-called Higginbotham-Randall Cemetery—where the "ghost picture" was taken.

**THE SETTLEMENT**, abandoned these many years, is in Pomfret's Ragged Hill section and is indeed "lost." A half mile from Ragged Hill Road, it is reached with difficulty via a rough overgrown cart path which at times becomes an unblazed Indian trail through a forest primeval. Nevertheless Chase, familiar with the wild terrain, guided us unerringly to the eerie, secluded spot.

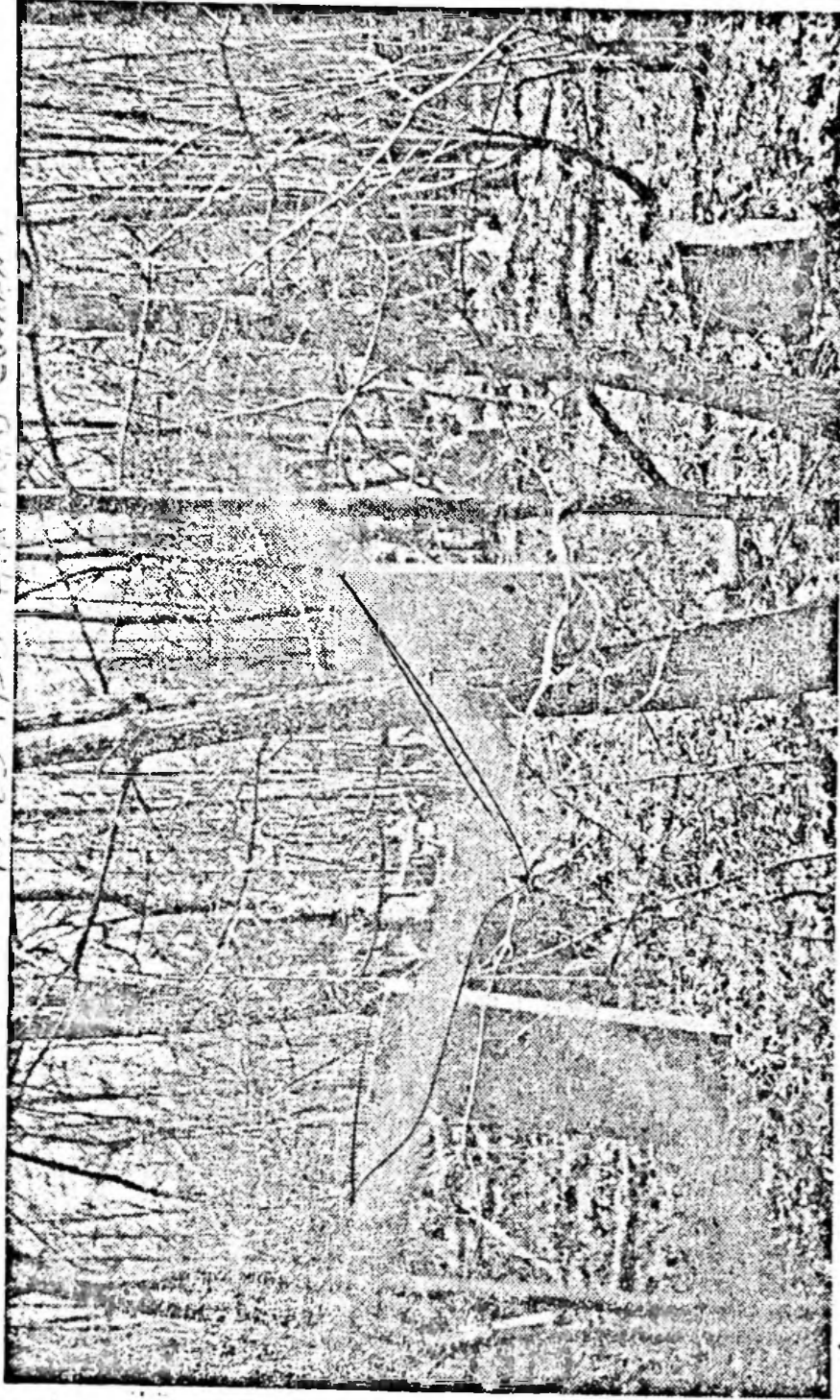
"The oldest gravestone is dated 1842," Chase said at the cemetery, pointing about him for emphasis. "However, others were buried here long before that, with just fieldstones for markers. There are about 35 graves, among them that of Dorcas Higginbotham who lived to be more than 100 years old.

"Some around these parts call the locality 'The Lost Settlement.' There's no county or town map—even in the State Library in Hartford—showing exactly where the settlement was. Cellar holes of houses and the foundation of a barn have survived. That's a cellar hole over there.

"There are still descendants of the Higginbothams in town. The family was originally Welsh. When did they first come here? In the 1770s from all the data I've been able to gather. No, there are no soldiers buried in the cemetery. Little is known about the Randalls. They seem to have been permitted to bury their family dead with the Higginbothams. That's why the graveyard is called the Higginbotham-Randall Cemetery."

**MASSIVE** walls and other heavy stone-work are mute evidence of the Higginbothams' talents as sturdy builders. The cemetery, measuring about 55 by 75 feet, is surrounded by a thick stone wall. One enters the enclosure by descending three huge stone steps befitting a Mayan temple in the jungle.

What's left of the Higginbotham water-power "plant" on nearby Mashamoquet Brook—the pent-up pond, the water



## Spooking of Pictures . . .

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by *Herbert J. Stoekel*

gate, the sluiceway, the site of the one-time shop—stem destined, like the pyramids, to last forever. According to our guide, the Higginbothams farmed the area for a living. In the shop they made flax wheels for "export." These wooden flax-spinning treadle machines produced an outside cash income.

"For years it's been a tradition hereabouts that there are weird happenings at night in the old settlement," Chase continued. "Down at the brook, even during the day, you can hear

children laughing and singing, it's said. And, if you've got the nerve to hang around the graveyard at night, the story goes, you'll see ghosts aplenty flitting about. There's no doubt in my mind that my camera caught three of them at one time. And in broad daylight too, with the sun shining.

"Now I don't believe in ghosts. But how came those three white streaks in the negative? As I've told a lot of people, if you've never seen a ghost, then how can you say those streaks

are not ghosts? Do ghosts have to wear sheets or look as if they're out of a Charles Addams cartoon? I don't think so. And neither do the ghosts.

"There was nothing wrong with the box camera I used or the film. Friends of mine, a married couple, wanted to see the cemetery. We three went there, and I first took their picture as they sat on the cemetery steps. Then I took a casual or random shot of the cemetery. Just the gravestones. The last five negatives were also ordinary or normal shots.

"But when the roll of eight negatives was developed—this is important—I was amazed to find I had photographed the ghosts on the third negative which, like the second, was another casual shot of the gravestones.

**IN A-B-C** English, the first two pictures, taken before the ghosts appeared, are okay and the five pictures, taken after they posed, are also okay. What's more, all eight pictures were taken in the cemetery at intervals and not in the same spot.

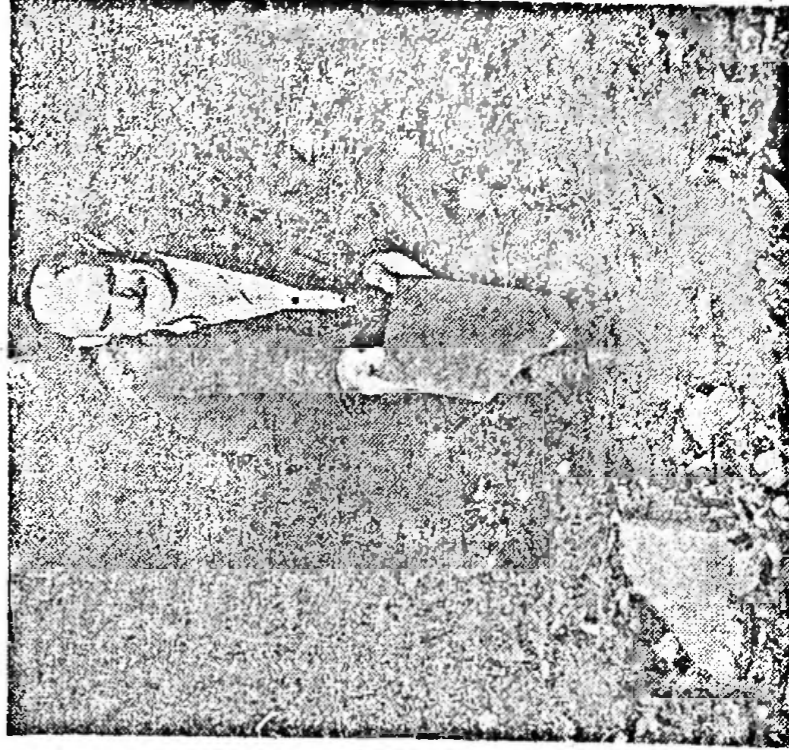
"The ghosts are in front of the graves of Dorcas Higginbotham, which is to the left, and that of Darius Higginbotham a little to the rear, their gravestones being unusually well preserved. Or perhaps the ghosts are hovering around the gravestones. Maybe one of them is Dorcas.

"The film was developed by the Grube Camera Shops and Studios, Putnam. They are unable to explain the presence of the streaks. I consider the negative so valuable I've placed a price of \$50,000 on it. An Englishman in Putnam tells me he has seen photographs taken in haunted English castles and which show identical streaks. Can you suggest any solution to the mystery?"

We shook our head. Negatively, that

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"Sounds like the natural Halloween story of 1956—a Connecticut story. When you write it, be sure to credit the three ghosts. Dorcas in particular."



**HARRY CHASE**, whose camera caught the other-worldly manifestations, kneels beside the Mashamoquet Brook sluiceway built by the Higginbothams. (Courant Photo—Arman J. Hatsian)



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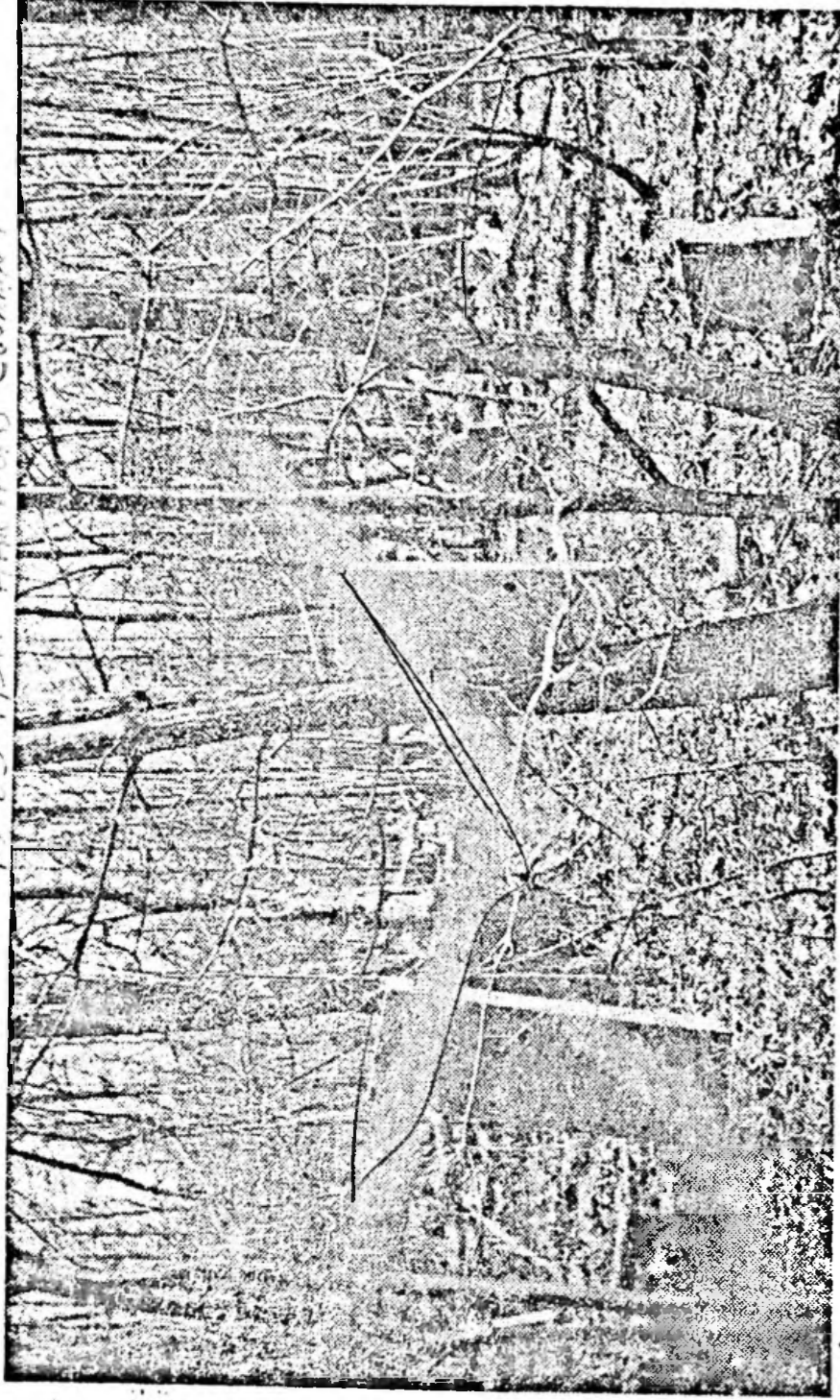
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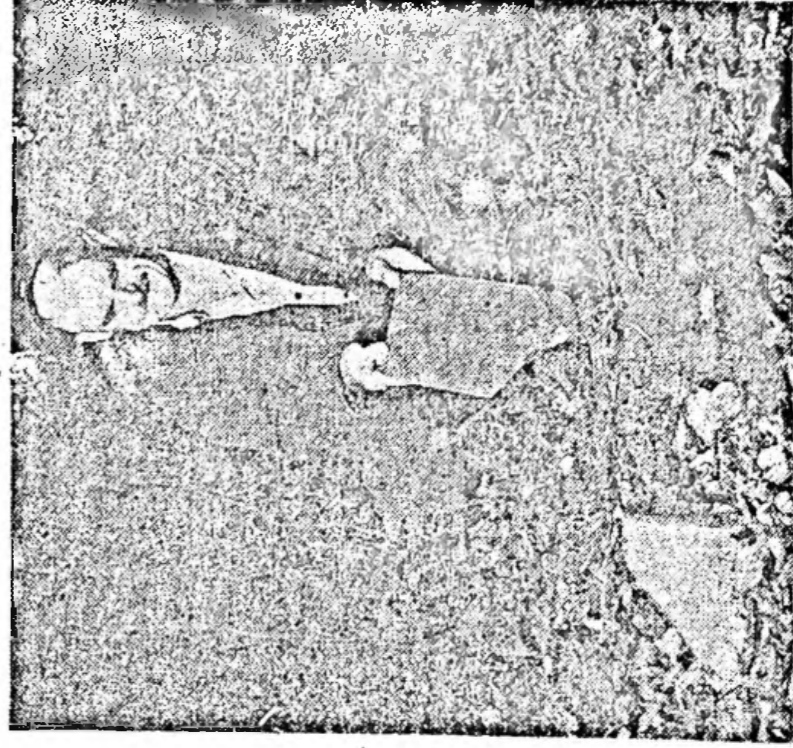
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