

Hell's Church, AKA New Hightower Baptist Church

As investigated Feb. 25th, 2005



From The Shadowlands – Haunted Places in Georgia:

“Cherokee County - Canton - Hell Church - is a place located in the old part of Canton. There is a long narrow road going back into the woods that is very difficult to get down. You then come upon a church, out in the middle of nowhere, there is a very small (one room) and white. Located directly across the road is a cemetery with graves dating back to the 18th century. Although there have been accounts of graves freshly dug. The story goes that back in the 80's a boy was found mutilated. Most say that it was a cult killing. But the church was shut down and the newspaper clipping of this horrible event still exists. The church has been re-opened but there are still accounts of hearing faint piano music coming from inside the church late at night.”

Well... once again, the Shadowlands has offered us information that is both incorrect and misleading. So first of all let's get the facts straight, shall we?

The correct name of the church and cemetery is New Hightower Baptist Church. It's the third church to stand there, the previous one having fallen victim to arson in the winter of 1990, making the one room structure reported in Shadowlands the old one, which is now long gone. Even before that there stood an old log cabin nearby that served double duty as both a school and a church. The road is curvy and dangerous but it's been paved for many years and not at all difficult to navigate. There are NO 18th century graves there. The oldest grave I'm aware of dates to the late 1800's. And *of course* there are fresh graves – the cemetery is still in use. Further, even though it's true that a body was found there in the 80's, there have never been any hard facts offered to back up the rumors of occult practices at the location.

A small group decided to check out the location on the 25th of February 2005. In attendance was Bev Greenfield, Vicki Luibrand, Jennifer McElhannon, Tina Burns, Jordan Windham, and myself, Bruce Burns. I had visited the site several times before and Tina had come with me once. It was the first visit for the rest of the group. We arrived shortly after 7:00 PM and took a quick walk around the church and then the cemetery. Upon the completion of our short tour, we commenced a preliminary investigation, breaking off into small groups and individual treks taking digital stills, infrared video, and audio recordings.



One of the typical orb photos from Hell's Church. Photo courtesy of Tina Burns.

There were two main areas where very strong negative impressions were felt. There is a pavilion behind the church that is probably used for meetings and outdoor suppers, etc. Several members of the team reported very negative feelings here, as if there was something very unpleasant lurking in the woods behind the pavilion. One member experienced chest pains and difficulty breathing while at the pavilion that lingered until he vacated the area.



*The woods behind the pavilion.
Several team members reported bad feelings about this area.
Photo courtesy of Tina Burns.*

The other area of negativity was centered around the area where stands what legend calls the "Hanging Tree". Team members reported increased levels of anxiety while in the proximity of this tree, while others felt nothing. Jordan in particular felt both drawn to, while at the same time, repulsed by the tree. Photography seemed to suggest a noticeable increase in orbs around the tree, but nothing conclusive. It is interesting to note that other paranormal teams have reported sensations of extreme negativity in both of the locations where we encountered them.



*The "Hanging Tree" (?) where members felt elevated anxiety.
Photo courtesy of Jordan Windham.*

Conclusion: Well, there really isn't one. While still photography, videography, and audio recordings all show no more abnormalities than one would expect to find at a cemetery, we still have the two areas of concern where negative energy was encountered. I have no opinion as to the tree. Perhaps it's possible that it was our subconscious minds influencing our impressions. We were, after all, aware of the tree's reputation beforehand. Or maybe there's more to the tree's reputation than simple legend? I do have an opinion regarding the area behind the pavilion. I sensed something of elemental origin there. The site sits in close proximity to the banks of the Etowah River on land that was once inhabited by prehistoric Native Americans, then the Creek Indians, and finally the Cherokee Indians. The Cherokees had many settlements and even placer gold mines along these waters before their forced removal in the 1830's. I sincerely feel that we encountered an elemental entity that was once well known to those old tribes. Perhaps we were trespassing on long forgotten sacred grounds?