

## Ong's Hat: Gateway to Another Dimension?

The New Jersey Pine Barrens have a plethora of deserted villages, most of them long abandoned. One of the most infamous is Ong's Hat in Burlington County. If you take the turnpike to exit four and follow Route 70 east, you'll come to Route 72 at Four Mile Circle. Taking a hard left leads to Ong's Hat and a trail that some say ends at a mysterious portal to another dimension.

The true reason as to why anyone would name a village Ong's Hat may be shrouded in mystery forever, but the folklore surrounding the town's name is well known.

Legend has it that at one time a resident of the area was a flashy young gentleman by the name of Ong (while his first name is unknown, his last is an old-time Pine Barrens name—one of the earliest Pines settlers was Jacob Ong). He was a fixture at local dances, where he wooed the ladies with his fancy dance moves and suave attire—most notably his silk hat.

Apparently, Ong was something of a "player," flirting and dancing with all the ladies he could. One of his love interests caught on to this practice at a dance and attacked Ong, taking his hat and stomping on it. Ong was upset that his chapeau had just been ruined. He ran outdoors and tossed the hat into the air out of frustration. It caught in the high branches of a pine tree and stayed there for years. It became a landmark by which people could find the small village, and the area was dubbed Ong's Hat.

As the Pine Barrens became less populated, Ong's Hat was all but forgotten. Today it is totally abandoned and would be nothing more than a footnote in history were it not for a very weird development—the opening of a gateway to another dimension.

The following history can be found in a book entitled *Ong's Hat: The Beginning*. The author, Joseph Matheny, is coy as to whether he intended the work as fact or fiction. Some claim that the book is pure fantasy and has set up a hoax that many have come to accept as real.

According to Matheny's history, a group of white jazz musicians and poets founded the Moorish Orthodox Church of America in the 1950s. The members of this small sect traveled the world, learning many different philosophies and spiritual practices. One of these travelers was known as Wali Fard.

When Fard returned from his travels in 1978, he spent all of his savings on two hundred acres in the New Jersey Pine Barrens. Along with a group of runaway boys from Paramus and two lesbian

anarchists, he moved onto the property and formed an exclusive sect, the Moorish Science Ashram.

Fard published a series of newsletters proclaiming his beliefs. Readers on the fringe began flocking to his land, including two scientists, Frank and Althea Dobbs. The Dobbs twins were raised in Texas, among a UFO-worshipping cult founded by their father. Needless to say, they were used to life on the outskirts of the mainstream. When they arrived in the Pines they set up a laboratory inside a ramshackle trailer and began making discoveries that shook the small commune to its core.

The siblings had previously studied at Princeton, where they submitted as their Ph.D. theses a series of equations that led to what they called "cognitive chaos." They were dismissed from the university and found their way to the Pines. In the remote locale, they were free to work further on their ideas. Their theories promoted the



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