

## Relics Revealed and Revisited

— Cases 15 & 16<sup>1</sup> —

In 1914, as Violet Parent was recovering from a severe illness, her deceased mother appeared to her and told her she would find a gold coin above one of the doorways in her apartment. Her husband, Gregory, later reported: “We both considered this merely a dream, for our apartment had just been thoroughly cleaned. Nevertheless, we looked, and sure enough, over a door leading to the porch we found a ten-dollar gold piece.”<sup>2</sup>

Now, the Parents were of very modest means. He was a grocery clerk and she a housewife. They lived in a “two-room apartment of threadbare aspect.” Thus they were most impressed by such a find, and so, understandably, they paid close attention to Violet’s ensuing visions.

Shortly, she began to fall into trances in which other spirits spoke to her. Some of these spirits claimed to be missionaries who had spent much of their earthly lives trying to convert the natives of Mexico, Southern California, and Arizona to Christianity. Other spirits said they had been Indians who were the subjects of these conversion attempts. Mrs. Parent, an illiterate woman who had grown up in St. Louis, had no idea what they were talking about. But, she understood quite well when the spirits directed her to other caches of money buried or hidden here and there around their hometown of Redlands, California. Within 6 years, the Parents had found sufficient funds to purchase their first house and automobile.

The locations of the loot were only revealed to give the Parents the means to pursue the agenda of the missionaries. They told Violet that the natives had buried numerous crosses and other religious artifacts throughout the Southwest. The padres had decided to try and prove their continuing existence in the spirit world by directing people to the location of these crosses. This would be exactly what skeptics had been asking for since the first claim of Survival was made: the spirits would reveal information that no one living knew or could have known.

And reveal it they did, and not just once, or twice, or thrice, which ought to have been proof enough. Over a period of 10 years, the Parents were directed to more than 50 widely separated locations across a region 600-miles long by 300-miles wide. Once they arrived at the location specified they were directed to a particular hillside or streambed or other landmark and told what they should find buried there. Sometimes the search was fruitless; perhaps because someone had already discovered the treasures, perhaps due to heavy rains or earthquakes, or it could be that the Indians simply mis-remembered the location of a ceremony. But the quests were successful often enough to net more than 1,500 crosses and other sacred objects!

Yes, you read that right. Information that only people long dead could possibly know enabled living people to find real, solid, manmade items FIFTEEN HUNDRED times! All this in ad-

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<sup>1</sup> The case numbers were originally assigned when the cases were published in *The Survival Files*, in 2007.

<sup>2</sup> This coin was just under ¾-inch (1.75 cm.) in diameter. Ten dollars then would equate to about \$187 now. (The coin itself would actually be worth several thousand today). How it got above the Parent’s door was never discovered.

dition to hundreds of finds of gold, silver, and paper money crammed into tins and bottles, or wrapped in oilskins or decaying leather pouches that had been carefully buried by the denizens of the desert and never retrieved.

At first, the Parents did not own a car, so they had to rely on neighbors and friends to chauffeur their excursions. Typically, Violet would direct the group to the designated site (often hundreds of miles from their home) and then the others would dig in the ground, chop at cactus, or pry up boulders as necessary to reveal and retrieve the crosses. Violet, being somewhat delicate and very fearful of rattlesnakes, did little digging herself. Numerous affidavits exist, signed by people who assisted on one or more of these expeditions, testifying that they found crosses precisely where the spirits predicted.

We know all of this because Gregory Parent kept detailed notes that ultimately filled 22 journals. He gave the dates and times of every excursion and he listed every item in every find. Most importantly for posterity, 5 years after his wife died, he wrote a letter to a man named Hamlin Garland.

Garland was a Pulitzer-prize winning author of over 50 books, mostly novels and biographies. Mr. Parent was likely attracted to him because his most recent book<sup>3</sup> was an account of his personal experiences as an investigator for the American Society for Psychical Research. Garland was intrigued enough by what he read in the letter to visit Parent at his apartment and view his journals and several pictures of the crosses. Parent wanted Garland to write a book about the discovery of the crosses. Garland liked the idea, but being busy with other matters, he did not attempt

to contact Parent again for almost 2 years, by which time Parent had died.

It took several months, but Garland managed to track down and obtain the entire collection of crosses along with Gregory Parent's journals and papers. The names of many people who had assisted the Parents in their searches were listed in the papers and Garland was able to locate fifteen of them — all of whom confirmed Parent's reports. As an example, in one interview a woman told Garland: "I myself picked up two containers for her — one from the sand on the seashore and one from the bed of a stream. To say that Violet had 'planted' these gold pieces and these wads of bills is absurd. She never had coins to plant, and furthermore, the rusted and rotted condition of these containers proved their long situation in the ground."

From these interviews and papers, Garland learned enough of the Parent's story to begin work on a book. From that book, appropriately titled *The Mystery of the Buried Crosses*,<sup>4</sup> the facts and quotes given here are derived.

As for the artifacts themselves, Garland notes that they were stored in "seventeen flat, glass-covered boxes, each case numbered and the places of discovery carefully recorded." No other classification had been done, so Garland sorted them into three groups as follows.

- The first grouping contained 70 figures of Christ about 3 inches long with uplifted arms [presumably from, or intended for, crucifixes]. These were probably made some 200 years earlier in the area of New Spain that would become Mexico and given out to the Indians by the Spanish padres. Garland classified them as "missionary period" along with numerous crosses and small tablets

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<sup>3</sup> Garland, Hamlin, *Forty Years Of Psychic Research: A Plain Narrative Of Fact*, McMillan, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *The Mystery of the Buried Crosses*, E.P. Dutton & Co., 1939.

stamped with dates (from 1769 to 1800) and the names of celebrated padres. These vary from 5 to 18 inches in length. According to the spirits, they were fashioned by artisans at the Mission of San Juan Capistrano.

- The second, and far larger, class contained crosses that impressed Garland as “wholly barbaric in character and immensely older” than the first group. The crosses (most single-barred but some double-barred) bore representations of various animals (such as wolves, apes, and birds), fruits, shells, etc. molded upon them. The figures were tribal totems and the crosses were paraphernalia for sun-worship ceremonies imported from Central America, according to the spirits.
- Garland’s third category consisted of crosses and plaques that bore human faces. The character of these faces seemed distinctly Oriental rather than Aztec or Spanish. Some of the heads were crowned with turbans and others wore tall headdresses. Perhaps the most amazing aspect was that no two of these artifacts were alike. In fact, Garland noted, this collection “appeared to be the work of many hands and many minds, not to say generations.”

Most of the crosses were of varying alloys of lead, tin, copper, antimony, iron, and aluminum. Some were of silver and a few were gold.

Note: As presented in *The Survival Files* book, each case is followed by a discussion between “the old man” [he] and his visitor [I] who has come seeking convincing evidence for an after-life. Here, “I” get rather enthusiastic after reading about the buried crosses.

“This is huge,” I asserted.

“Yes.”

“I mean really HUGE!

“Like, why haven’t I heard of this before?

Why hasn’t everybody heard of this?”

“So,” he said, “you still have questions.”

“Yeah, I’ve got questions. Where are the crosses now? What motivated the Parents to do all that work? Have others authenticated the crosses? Has anyone else ever found such crosses? Are there any left? There must be some still out there. Do you know any good mediums? I’ll bring a metal detector. How soon can we go?

“Whoa back!” he said. “I appreciate your enthusiasm and I’ll answer your questions, but first I have a question for you: What difference would it make?”

“What difference would what make?”

“The answers to any of the questions you just asked, or any questions that might be asked. What possible impact could they have on the level of proof for Survival provided by this case?”

I was still pondering this when he spoke up and said: “Let’s break down exactly why this case is so evidential. The claim is that something was found that could not possibly have been found without information held only by dead folk. This breaks down into two separate claims. The first is that something was found. How certain can we be of that?”

“Well, if the crosses were not discovered by the Parents, then they were already available to them. Is there any evidence of that?” I asked.

“Not that I’ve been able to find.”

“Then, are there any records of such crosses existing previously?”

“Garland could find only two references to the native crosses — a single footnote in an obscure padre’s journal quoting an explorer as saying that in 1604 (150 years before the establishment of the first mission) he had come upon a

tribe that wore crosses in their hair,<sup>5</sup> and a picture in the *Handbook of the American Indian*, of a similar cross dug from a mound in Wisconsin.<sup>6</sup> Unknown to Garland, two similar crosses had been found in 1832 at an Indian grave-mound in Georgia and an additional eight crosses were unearthed in 1924 near Tucson Arizona.<sup>7</sup>

“So there is evidence that this kind of thing existed, but no one is known to have possessed a large collection of them.”

“That is correct. And,” he continued, “that is why the crosses are so much more evidential than the money. As silly as it is to think that Violet Parent went all over Southern California planting gold and silver coins just so she could dig them up again, it is *possible* for her to have done so, because such coins were theoretically within her reach. This remote possibility would weaken the case slightly.”

“I see your point,” I said. “Violet could not have begged, borrowed, or stolen the crosses because the crosses simply were not available. And, if she didn’t have them, she could not have planted them.”

“Which is why the large number of artifacts is important to the case. If only three crosses had been recovered, the charge that they had been planted by the Parents might carry some weight, even if all three had been found buried beneath a couple of feet of undisturbed ground (as many were). But 1,500 items negate any such possibility. One might just as well believe that they were

all planted by Paul Bunyan with the magical assistance of Babe the Blue Ox.”

“So the first claim has been satisfied,” I said, “we are certain that something was found.”

“Now we consider if there is or was any way that the crosses could have been found other than by direction of the dearly departed.”

I shook my head slowly, “The only half-way reasonable alternative I can think of is maybe God told her.”

“I’m generally reticent to guess God’s reasons for anything,” he said, “but I can’t imagine why He would need to pose as dead padres and spread lies about the afterlife.”

“Good point. — Well, there’s always the worm cam.”<sup>8</sup>

“Or Violet was adept at traveling the desert in her astral body. Only one problem with either of those conjectures: How did she know where to look? Maybe, just maybe, I could accept that Violet’s wandering soul somehow happened to stumble upon one of the crosses ... ”

“I like the image of a stumbling soul,” I grinned.

“But to find them over and over again throughout an area of some 200,000 square miles? Never. ... The most super super-psi imaginable couldn’t account for that. No. The only conceivable way anyone could consistently locate all those crosses is to be given directions by the persons who hid them.”

“It all adds up to an extraordinarily solid

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<sup>5</sup> Garland, *Buried Crosses*, p. 165.

<sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, p.36

<sup>7</sup> Steiger, Brad, *Mysteries of Time and Space*, Dell Publishing Company, 1974, pp. 41-47.

<sup>8</sup> A reference to an earlier discussion of viewing via worm-holes in space as posited by Arthur C. Clarke in his book, *The Light of Other Days*.

proof of Survival," I said. "The only thing it lacks is replicability. Someone needs to repeat what the Parents did and find more crosses. I suggest we do that now." I stood up and stretched.

"I suggest you keep reading," he said.

I sat down, turned the page, and read.

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When Hamlin Garland received the letter from Gregory Parent, he had just published *Forty Years of Psychic Research*, a book he felt was the final summation of his work as an investigator of the paranormal. But the letter, and the journals, papers, and artifacts he subsequently discovered, brought an unexpected and astounding capstone to his avocation. Indeed, what Garland titled "The Mystery of the Buried Crosses" would prove to be one of the most convincing arguments for the survival of human consciousness after physical death.

Once he had read Parent's journals and gazed upon the 1,500 crosses with his own eyes, Garland knew that he had been handed a case of supreme importance. He also knew that the case needed to be verified by an independent researcher duplicating the feat of finding such items buried in the California desert. Despite being 76 years old, Garland realized that this task had fallen on his shoulders.

His first step was to find a medium who could contact the spirits of Gregory or Violet Parent or of the missionaries themselves. As he was considering who might be best suited for the job, Garland received a letter from a Dr. Nora Rager in Chicago who had read *Forty Years of Psychical Research* and wished to introduce him to a medium named Sophia Williams, who had recently moved to Los Angeles. Garland interviewed Williams and found her perfect for the job. She was

friendly, could work anywhere (indoors or out), anytime (day or night), was anxious to help, and made no charge for her services. As Garland writes: "It was in this providential way that I found myself in possession of a most intelligent co-investigator."<sup>9</sup>

In her very first session, Williams immediately became a conduit for several of Garland's deceased friends. One of whom, Henry Fuller, often acted as a control in the coming sessions. But it wasn't just the obvious acquaintances of Garland who spoke through Williams in that first session; spirits that he hardly remembered showed up, and at least one fellow that he didn't know at all. The latter identified himself as Harry Friedlander, a recently deceased friend of the stenographer whom Garland had hired to take notes of the session. Williams had never met the stenographer nor did she know he would attend the session. Friedlander accurately described his recent death in an airplane accident. Garland refers to this performance by Williams as "our first evidence of her power." ... There would be a lot more.

At their third sitting, on March 17, 1937, the spirit of Violet Parent spoke through the medium. She affirmed that there were more crosses to be found and she promised the aid of the padres in finding them. As the sessions continued, many of the missionaries did come through, plus several early explorers of the American Southwest.

Besides the veridical material received through Sophia Williams, there came some interesting, and reassuring, insights into the afterlife. One of the padres noted: "We have all changed our opinions about many things — not only about the Indians, but about religion. We learn

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<sup>9</sup> Garland, *Buried Crosses*, p. 49.

the truth on this side. ... We have found now that there is no difference in creed."

All that Garland and company managed to get from their first few expeditions were good lessons in how hot the desert could get, how steep the hills, how hard the ground, and how prickly the cactus that seemed to grow everywhere. Then on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, 1937, while digging as instructed near the roots of an ancient oak tree some 75 miles northeast of Los Angeles, Garland's daughter, Constance, struck a cross.

Greatly inspired by this first find, Garland *et al* took every opportunity to make the lengthy excursions prescribed by the spirits. The story of the successes and failures of these trips is well told in Garland's book. Suffice it to say here that a total of 16 crosses were discovered in widely scattered and generally difficult-to-reach locations.

And so, the "research" of the Parents was duplicated and authenticated. People with no connection to the Parents, once again, have been able to find something that could not have been consistently found without information held only by the supposedly dead.

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## Discussion

"Do you still want to go searching for crosses?"

"It sounds like it would be fun," I replied. "Although, by now, most of the remaining ones are probably entombed in the foundations of condominiums and strip malls."

"So, did your questions get answered?"

"The more I learn, the more I want to know. I intend to read that book and get the full story."

But I still want to know where the crosses are now."

"Garland's granddaughter inherited<sup>10</sup> those that he and Williams found and she donated them to the West Salem Historical Society. This organization is housed in the Garland homestead in the town of West Salem in the county of, believe it or not, *La Crosse*, Wisconsin.<sup>11</sup>

"As for the original 1,500 unearthed by the Parents, Garland donated them to a California museum, but no one seems to be sure what happened to them after that."

"So we've got the 16 crosses Garland found, but we have only his word that the 1,500 others ever existed?"

"The word of a highly respected man with an impeccable reputation. It is simply inconceivable that he would choose to crown his career with a fraud. And then, of course, there are the photographs."

"There are pictures?"

"Oh yes. among the numerous illustrations in Garland's book are 10 photographs of crosses and other items from the Parent's original collection."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Garland died within a year after he completed his book on the crosses; he was 79.

<sup>11</sup> So named by French explorers when they saw Winnebago Indians on the prairie playing a game similar to the French game of lacrosse.

<sup>12</sup> Keith Newlin displays a couple of these photos at: <http://www.uncw.edu/garland/gallery/garframe.htm>

*Note added for 2015 revision of this case:* Up until 2011, all we have had of the relics are the few photographs published in his book and those kept by the West Salem Historical Society in Wisconsin. In December 2011, Michael E. Tymn informed Bill Stoney that their mutual friend, Lisette Coly — head of the Parapsychology Foundation and granddaughter of its founder, Eileen Garrett — had told him of a new find. While going through some boxes long-stored in her basement, she had discovered a box that contained 23 of the missing artifacts (21 cross-shaped and 2 lettered plates). The box also contained a letter of transmittal from the son of Garland's publisher, that establishes that these were from Garland. Handwritten notes and tags on several of the artifacts give the date when they were found, showing that they were some of the originals collected by the Parents. Pictures taken by Stoney of these artifacts may be seen at [www.survivaltop40.com](http://www.survivaltop40.com).

"Didn't you say something about the medium in this case using a trumpet or megaphone?"

"The way in which spirits spoke through Sophia Williams is a fascinating and evidential story unto itself," he replied. "So fascinating that I didn't mention it in the cases of the crosses because I thought it would distract from the key point that information known only to the dead was being revealed."

"Now that I have found the evidence truly convincing, can you tell me the rest of the story?"

"Sure can. Voices from the other side could be heard in Sophia Williams' presence as high-pitched, but clear, whispers. Sometimes they seemed to emanate from her chest, sometimes from nearby objects, and sometimes from the empty air above her head, but the spirits did not use her vocal chords or tongue. This was well demonstrated on numerous occasions when researchers held their hands over her mouth or

taped it shut while the voices continued unabated."

"Do you mean that Garland and his stenographer and whomever had to sit very close to Williams to hear these voices?"

"At first they did. This is where the trumpet was utilized. They found that they could hear best when Williams held the large end to her chest and Garland listened at the small end, as if using a stethoscope to hear the voices. Then Garland got the idea that he might be able to use a microphone and amplifier to better hear the voices. He shopped around and found an early version of an intercom that consisted of two boxes connected with 60 feet of wire. This mechanism allowed him to sit in his study and listen to the voices emanating from the medium sitting several rooms away. Thus amplified, the spirits could be heard clearly by anyone in the room. What made this set-up so convincing was that the conversations flowed smoothly between the spirits and Garland even though the transmission was one way. Williams could not hear Garland unless he depressed a button on his end of the intercom."

"Let me get this picture perfectly clear," I said. "Garland and, I would assume, one or two of his friends and family, are sitting in a room in his house listening to voices coming from this newfangled gizmo. The voices answer some question of Garland's and then he presses a button on the ..."

"Nope," he interrupted, "he never pressed the button unless he wanted to talk with the medium herself. Williams could not hear Garland's questions or commentary to the spirits."

"So, in order to carry on an intelligible conversation, the spirits of the padres and whomever must have been able to hear Garland directly.

They then replied via the medium in another room. That is most unusual, indeed, and most impressive! Was she alone?" I asked.

"Most of the time, Garland's wife or some other person sat with Williams. None of them ever heard the voices while the spirits spoke to Garland through the intercom."

"What was Williams doing while all this communicating was going on?"

"Often she would sit and read a book or magazine."

I wondered: "Did she have to hold the transmitter to her chest?"

"No. Sometimes she held it in her lap, but it seemed to work just as well sitting on a table beside her."

"Could she hear the voices then?"

"At times she heard a few voices, but she believed that the spirits were teaching themselves to use the transmitter directly."

"I can see why you didn't include this information in your cases," I said. "An ability such as that would indeed have been a distraction from the already amazing proof of the crosses."

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[A Survival-Top-40 case](#)