

Oregon Vortex (House of Mystery)

By Maureen Flanagan Battistella

The Oregon Vortex and House of Mystery, located on Sardine Creek in Gold Hill, is one of Oregon's oldest and most original examples of Roadside Americana. Opened to tourists in 1930, the attraction is the earliest documented mystery spot or gravitational hill in the United States—a place where bubble levels, tape measures, yardsticks, balls that roll uphill, and plumb lines are used to demonstrate the phenomena.

The Old Grey Eagle Mining Company outpost and nearly collapsed assay house were rediscovered in 1914 by prospector William McCollugh, who persuaded his friend, engineer and geologist John Litster, to travel to the United States. Born in Alva, Scotland, on April 30, 1886, Litster spent years researching the paranormal phenomena of the 165-foot magnet radius, which is said to bend light, defy gravity, and alter mass.

After Litster's death on December 4, 1959, his wife Mildred sold the Oregon Vortex to Irene and Ernie Cooper, whose daughter Maria and grandson Mark have continued to keep the attraction open.

Herbert Lundy touted the popularity of the Vortex as early as April 1938 in the Portland *Oregonian*. John Litster detailed his observations in his "Notes and Data Relative to the Phenomenon at the Area of the House of Mystery in 1944." James Randi, a reformed magician and illusionist, deconstructed its science in 1998, using photography and mathematics to describe the claims of the Oregon Vortex as optical illusions.

Sources

Kirby, Doug Ken Smith and Mike Wilkins. *The New Roadside America: The Modern Traveler's Guide to the Wild and Wonderful World of America's Tourist Attractions*. New York: Fireside, 1992, pp. 88-89. www.RoadsideAmerica.com.

Oregon Vortex and House of Mystery. <http://www.OregonVortex.com>

The Oregon Encyclopedia

https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_vortex_house_of_mystery_/