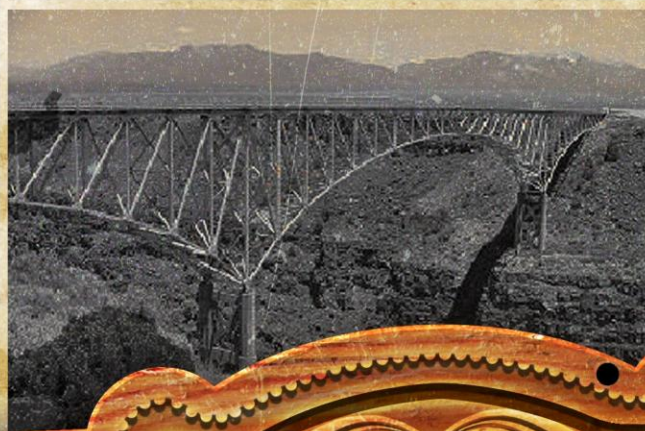




# REPORT

RIO GRANDE GORGE BRIDGE

INVESTIGATION



*Taos  
New Mexico*

NM062

**SOUTHWEST  
GHOST HUNTERS  
ASSOCIATION**



**UNSOLVED  
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**2005**

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## Forward

The word “investigation” is defined as  
“a searching inquiry for ascertaining facts; detailed or careful examination.”

The key word here is “facts”. Do ghosts exist? No, it has not been proven.  
Therefore are no facts to investigate.

What we do have is the testimony of the witnesses and this is where an investigational process will work. Investigations are often viewed as a skeptical activity because the main goal is trying to determine what the witness actually saw. Is it explainable or not? This is done through critical thinking and an event replication process developed by SGHA. This is an important concept because what defines a haunting or ghost sighting is “Multiple witnesses reporting unusual phenomena over a period of time”. If these phenomena can be explained, the witness reports are no longer validating paranormal activity as a cause and thus there is no ghost or haunting. Additionally historical research may be done in an attempt to validate facts.

It is important to understand that the goal of an investigation is not to find evidence of the paranormal but to attempt to identify any natural or manmade causes of the reported phenomena

### Definition of Terms

**Investigation Status:** Unsolved investigations will have either an open or closed status. An investigation is given an “Open” status if:

The investigators were unable to replicate all of the witness events. Something significant remains that is still unsolved.

It is important to understand that an “open” investigation does not mean that the unsolved facts are paranormal in nature. It simply means that we have exhausted our resources and cannot solve the “open” items/events.

A “Closed” status indicates that there is insufficient data or confounding variables that prevents replication or identifying possible explanations. This often occurs when investigators do not have direct access to witnesses or some other environmental change has occurred that creates confounding variables.



## Confidentiality Notice

Many of the witnesses interviewed have wished to remain anonymous in exchange for presenting their accounts of paranormal experiences. We honor that request and thus witnesses will often be identified by aliases. Any coincidence between aliases and actual persons is unintentional.

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## **Part 1: Location Information**

Rio Grande Gorge Bridge

Taos, NM

## **Part 2: Location History**

Built in 1965, it was called the "Bridge to Nowhere," as there was not enough funding to continue the road from the other side. At 650 feet above the Rio Grande and 1200 feet across, it is the second highest suspension bridge in the United States.



The Rio Grande Gorge at this location is 1200 feet wide and 600 feet deep. Although the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge is often referred to as a steel arch bridge because of the appearance of its main span, it is more properly described as a continuous steel deck truss. This bridge has truss spans of



300, 600 and 300 feet and a 36-foot steel I-beam approach span at each end. It has a total length of 1272 feet and a 28-foot roadway.

It was fabricated by the American Bridge Company and erected by J. H. Ryan and Son. The total cost of the bridge was \$2,153,000. A high line spanning the gorge was used to position the steel box beam members during its construction.

The Rio Grande Gorge Bridge was designed by the New Mexico State Highway Department Bridge Design Section and it won first place for the most beautiful span in 1966 in competition sponsored by the American Institute of Steel Construction.

### **Part 3: Reported Phenomenon**

Locals in the area say that the bridge is a hot spot for suicides and that the bridge is haunted by ghosts that tempt people into jumping to their deaths. However, there is a specific ghost that is often seen on the west side of the bridge. According to witnesses, the ghost appears as a young Hispanic woman wearing jeans and a white T-shirt. She is often mistaken as a "real" person as she walks east on the south walkway of the bridge. When she reaches the center, she suddenly vanishes.

The most creditable witness is a State Trooper who encountered the ghost one evening while on patrol in October of 2001. He was heading west on the bridge when he passed a young juvenile Hispanic woman who was walking east on the structure's south walkway. Thinking that she may have had car trouble, he continued crossing before turning around near the bridge's identification marker. As he turned his patrol car around, the headlights illuminated the bridge ahead. There was nobody there.

Since it would have been impossible for the woman to completely cross to the other side, he accelerated back towards the location where he last saw her. The only logical conclusion would be that the woman had jumped off of the bridge.

After pulling over near the center of the bridge, the trooper used a high powered spotlight to search the area of the gorge below. There were no signs of anything unusual but it was possible that the body landed in the river and drifted down stream. He radioed in the incident and prepared a



report. However no missing person reports were filed and no body was found. Three months after this encounter, the same State Trooper saw this woman again, walking on the same section of the bridge. Once again, when he proceeded to investigate, the woman mysteriously vanished.

Since that time he has heard stories from other State troopers that have



*Area where the ghost of a young woman disappears.*

had similar encounters with an identical woman. Other stories of this phantom woman have been told with elements of the story being very similar. Most of the stories are told by a few locals with the exception of several which have been posted on ghost forums on the Internet.

## **Part 5: Investigation**

Our investigations were conducted in 2005 and focused on trying to identify any possible alternative explanations for what the State Troopers had seen.



The first hypothesis we looked at was to see if a person could maneuver and hide on the other side of the railing (thus giving the illusion of jumping). From our observations, this could be possible but would be very unlikely due to the degree of difficulty and the skill required.



The second hypothesis is that, somehow, the woman was able to sprint across the bridge before the trooper could turn his car around at the other end. We were able to test this since we knew the approximate location where the woman was when the trooper spotted her. This testing failed as well. Even with our fastest "runner" no one was able to get anywhere close to the other side before our car turned around.

## **Part 6: Research**

The major focus of the historical research was to see if we could match the description of the "ghost" with a known person who had committed suicide



at the bridge. This turned out to be quite a daunting task as there have been dozens of suicides on the bridge since its construction.

These are some of the references we were able to locate through the Taos Daily Horse Fly, one of the local news sources. (This is not a complete list of the known suicides that have occurred on the bridge, just the females *that could match the description.*)

*27 Aug, 1992: Katherine Seed Kimbril, 50, of Taos (for 8 years)*

*Kimbril's body found in Rio Grande Gorge, an apparent suicide. She left a four-page letter in her '67 Ford Fairlane addressed to her mother concerning the disposition of her possessions along with various other documents connected with witchcraft and UFOs including a statement saying that she was a "UFO breeder."*

*27 April, 2003: Mariana Augustini, 44*

*Augustini of Santa Fe and Vermont jumped to her death from the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge leaving a suicide note in her car.*

*4 June, 2003: Susan Jayne Weiss*

*Weiss, of Santa Fe, (no age given), committed suicide by jumping off the bridge. Her body found in the gorge on 20 July.*

Further analysis revealed that none of these women match the description given by any of the State Troopers.

## **Part 7: Conclusion**

It is indisputable that many people have committed suicide on the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge. While our research was unable to find a young woman matching the description of the ghost that is seen on the bridge, the list compiled during our research is far from complete. While this site has some interesting stories, it does not seem to be overly active. It is possible that certain stories could have been embellished over the years and contributed to the development of another urban legend.

However, confounding variables are presented by the accounts of the State troopers and the veridical information that exists between their accounts.



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## Part 8: Photographs





