Twitter Thread by longer night



longer night
@bombsfall

So, if you drive out into the mountains in Bedford county you come to this very remote area. Aside from a ski resort and some state park infrastructure here and there it's pretty isolated. Only 40 minutes or so from Altoona or Johnstown but you have to work to get out here.



You wind around ridges and through valleys, woods, farms, and the odd tiny village for quite a while and then take a very long dirt and/or gravel road in various states of upkeep. Keep going for a few miles and you come across a small pull off, and a sign.



In 1856 this area was pretty wild, and one spring day two children, brothers ages 5 and 7, disappeared. Their dad had gone off into the woods to see why their dog was barking. When he returned they were gone.

The dad looked for them and not finding them enlisted neighbors. Within a few days there were apparently hundreds if not thousands of people from the wider region out combing the mountains.

A guy wrote a book about this whole series of events in 1888 that chronicles how weird things got, which if you have the time and inclination to read this extremely dramatic and maudlin retelling of things, you can find here: https://t.co/IRoqpCpQIA

The woods out there are pretty thick and the terrain is rough, lots of ridges and hollows, very easy to get turned around, views obstructed all over the place.



The search kept expanding, and it went on for days. They got to the point where some of the searchers convinced the family to call in a witch from one county over. She said she knew where the kids were, asked for payment up front, and led a group

around for days.

Sorry to report that the witch was not particularly helpful.

So 10 days later, like 10 miles away or so, a farmer named Jacob Dibert heard about the missing children. According to the story, he had a dream that night that showed him a stream and a valley and a big birch tree, and at the base of the tree the children were lying dead.



He apparently had this dream for two more nights. He asked his wife if the specific place existed and she, having grown up on this side of the mountain, said there was but that there was no way the kids could have gone that far from home.

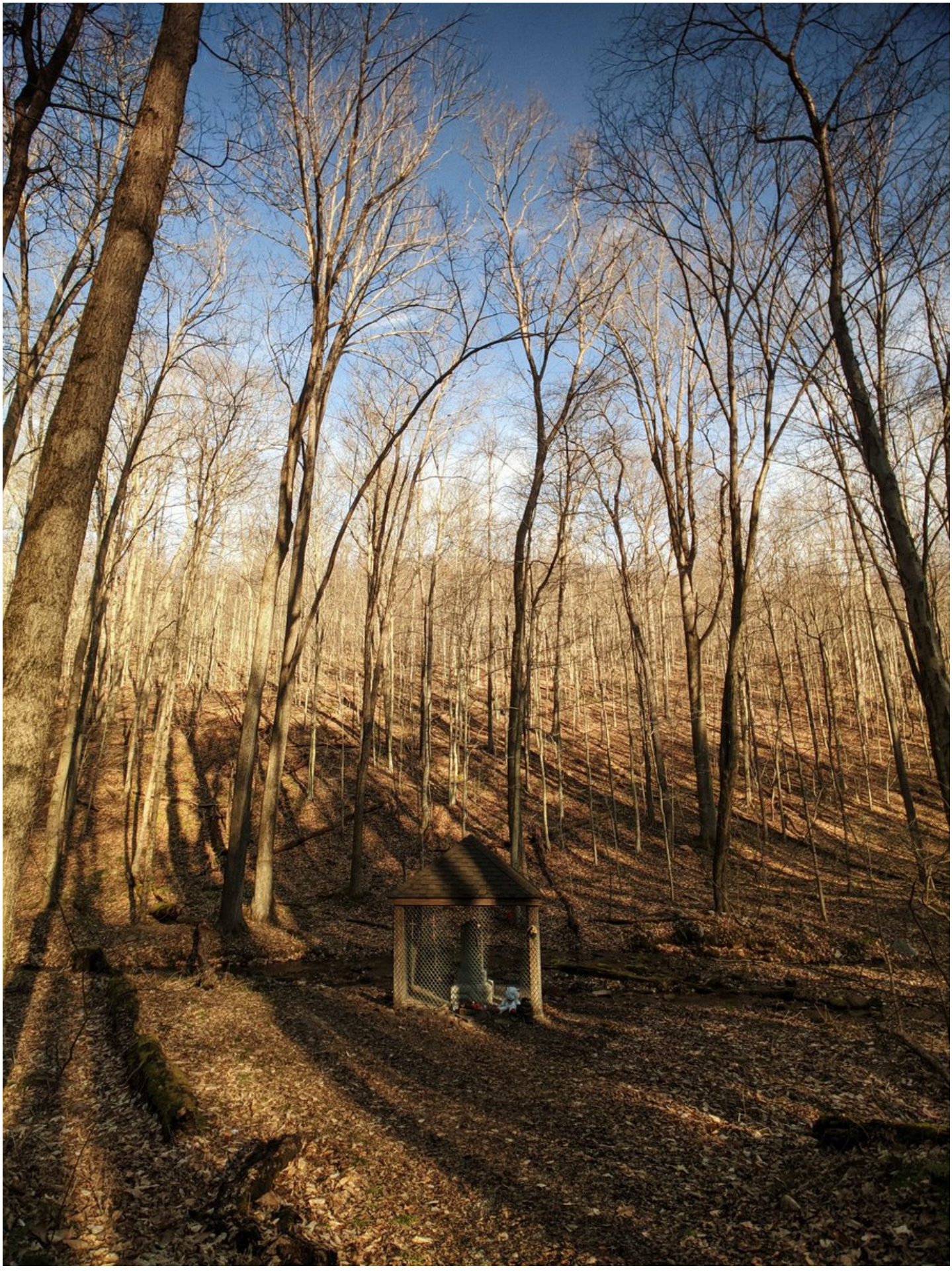


So he went to his brother in and law and said hey I know where the kids are. I DREAMED IT. The brother thought he was full of shit, but when Dibert said he would go anyway, he decided to go along so the guy wouldn't get lost himself since it

was unfamilair and rough terrain.

As in the dream, as they got closer, following the stream, they passed various items he has forseen- a dead deer, a discarded child's shoe, and a broken birch branch. And sure enough, at the base of the big birch tree by the stream, they found the bodies of the children.

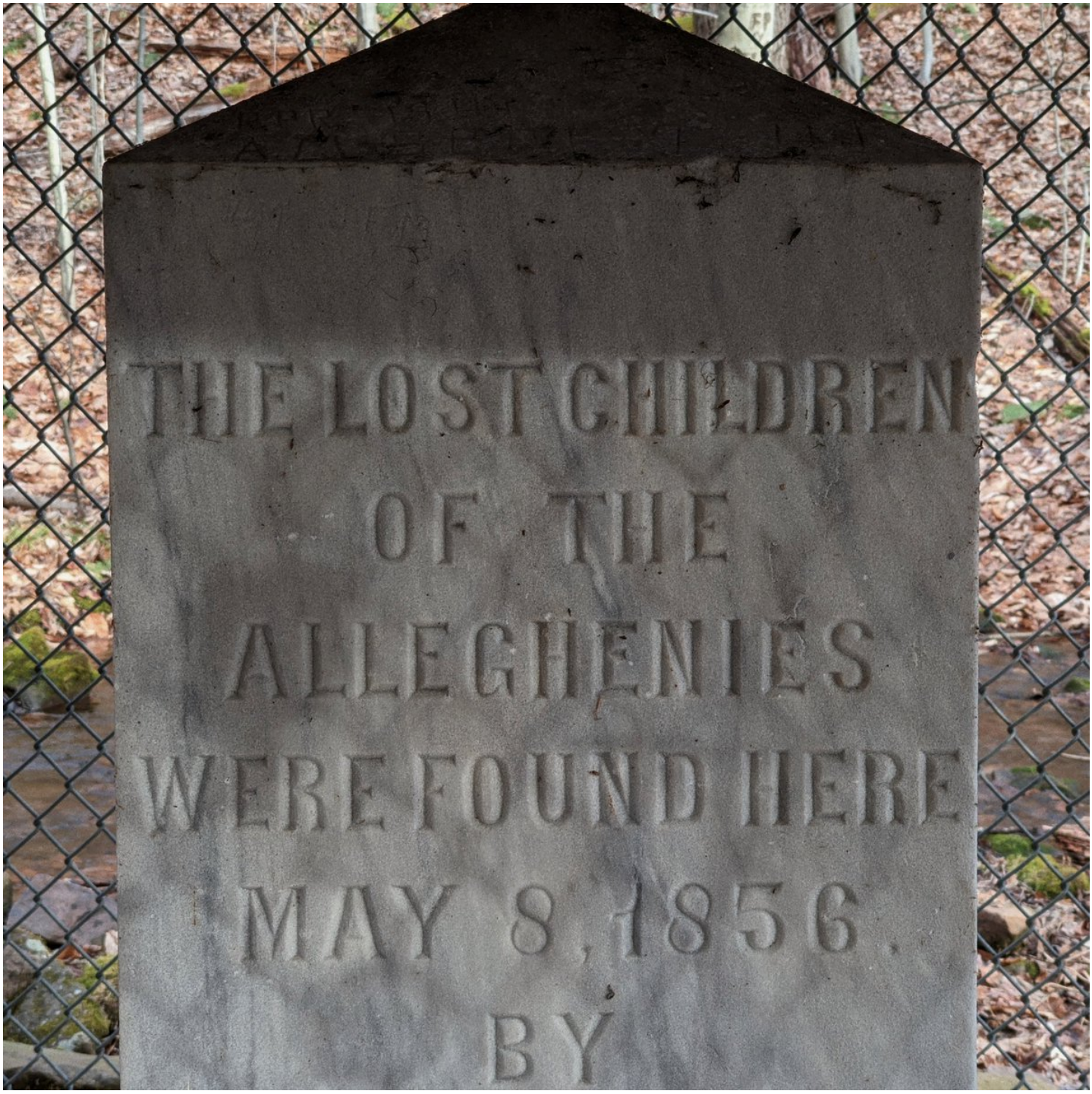
50 years later they put a monument up on the spot. That's where we hiked out to today.



15 years ago the monument was restored and enclosed. Now people trudge out here to leave kids toys, throw coins in, and weave crosses in the fencing out of twigs and sticks.



The restored monument with the original from 1906.



Something we noticed was that the monument specifies that Dibert and his brother in law found the children. The monument was renovated and is kept up by the Dibert family. The whole area ends up being sort of a tribute to this supposedly clairvoyant dude along with the dead kids.



We left and drove a few miles down the dirt road until it hooked up with a paved one. At this end of the road there is a truly fantastic sign.



So you can go read the book if you want the whole story from closer to when it occurred, including info from Dibert's widow. Dibert unfortunately died a few years later during the Civil War. He survived many battles but died in Virginia under much less thrilling circumstances.

Reading what info there is it did appear that the kids died from exposure 5 or 6 miles from home while lost in the woods for 7 days. They had been dead a few days when they were found. That said I think we can all agree the circumstances here are a bit odd.

So either:
- Dibert had direct knowledge of where the kids were.
- He and his bro-in-law found the kids after Dibert's wife told him about the area which he knew to be unsearched and he made up the dream to justify trekking out there.
- The dream stuff was just local folklore.

According to the book suspicion had in the days before the kids were found fallen on their parents, who were supected to have murdered their children to gain sympathy and financial aid from their neighbors. But the property was searched and nothing found and they were cleared.

Which is to say there doesn't seem to be much record of Dibert being a suspect. I don't actually know how he could have pulled off a murder (1. hard to murder someone via exposure and 2. know exactly where they died out in the mountains). But you can probably imagine ways.

My guess is that the kids really did get lost on the mountain and a lot of bad luck kept them from being found, which is pretty common, and Dibert got a hunch and followed it and made up the dream or it was invented whole cloth as community lore in the years immediately after.

The book is great btw b/c it has this overbearingly maudlin style. Dude does a lot of "one can imagine the terror and suffering of these lambs, these innocent children, it probably went a little something like this..."

The post script to this story is 30 years or so later a woman got lost in the cedar swamps in the same mountains and was missing for 2 days and nobody could find her until a dude a few miles away dreamed her exact location. She was safely found.

The guy who dreamed it? Isaac Dibert, son of Jacob Dibert.