

Rock Rimmon Has Spawned Many Legends:  
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Towering 116 feet above West Manchester, Rock Rimmon is the city's most prominent feature. The great ledge, formed millions of years ago and scraped bare by glacial sheets in the Ice Age, has survived centuries of erosion while the surrounding lands were torn down to their present level.

Surviving along with the Rock, and as much a part of it as the stubborn pine trees clinging to its stony face, is a small collection of legends and curious facts. Some of these date back to Colonial times; tales of love, tragedy, treasure, and a mysterious stone profile.

The oldest of these legends concerns the origin of the name "Rock Rimmon." Prior to the American Revolution, when Manchester was only a fledgling town, a young Englishman named Alberto, just recently arrived in the New World, fell in love with an Indian girl from a village near Amoskeag Falls.

Alberto had been well-educated, and spent much of his time trying to teach the Indians. He found the girl to be an intelligent, responsive student. She quickly mastered the English language, and spent her days in the town among the settlers. The white townspeople, however, did not like her Indian name, which they considered pagan, so they gave her the Christian name of Raymond.

Raymond's association with the Englishman alienated her from her tribe. Many of the young warriors resented her white suitor, forcing him to stay away from their village. Undeterred by this opposition, Alberto and Raymond became engaged. They decided to go to England to be married and live with Alberto's family. The evening before their intended journey, they met on the great rock west of the river, pledged their love, and watched the magnificent sunset. Promising to meet there again at dawn, they parted. Raymond returned to her father's lodge, Alberto took the path through the woods back to town.

One of the warriors had followed Raymond to her meeting, and trailed Alberto down the forest path. Before Alberto could reach town the Indian caught up with him, killed him with his tomahawk, and took the scalp.

When he returned to the village the Indian displayed the scalp to his friends and boasted of his accomplishment. Raymond, awakened by the commotion, walked outside to the fire. The warrior, seeing her, grinned. "Raymond, behold your lover!" he shouted, tossing the scalp at her feet. The frightened girl stared at it, trembling, then returned silently to her lodge.

She lay awake all night. Shortly before dawn she packed her belongings, took the bundle and began to climb the path leading to the cliff. Suspecting what the girl had in mind, her father tried to stop her, but she doggedly walked on to the edge of the precipice. The first streaks of light appeared in the east, coloring the river a shining silver. "Alberto," she whispered, "I told you I would meet you here at dawn." Then, with a last glance towards her village, she flung herself from the rock.

It was several days before the settlers learned what had happened. They found the bodies and buried them side-by-side along the riverbank. Not wanting trouble with the Indians over what most considered the result of Alberto's own folly, they let the incident pass. They did, however, name the ledge, "Rock Raymond" after the Indian girl who

gave up her life there. Over the years the name changed, through misunderstanding, and became “Rock Rimmon.”

How much truth there is to this tale is impossible to determine. Indians did inhabit the area at the time this supposedly occurred, and the rock was widely called “Rock Raymond” and “Rock Rimmond,” even in this century, but that is all that is actually known. The legend itself originated prior to 1850.

A more plausible explanation for the name “Rock Rimmon” was offered by William E. Moore, who researched the question 100 years ago. He maintained it is named after the “Rock of Rimmon” mentioned several times in the Bible. A stony hill 10 miles north a Jerusalem, the scriptural Rock Rimmon was the scene of many bloody battles, with 25,000 men said to have lost their lives there in the ancient Jewish wars. Six hundred members of the Tribe of Benjamin once held the fortress-like rock for four months against powerful enemies. The biblical word, “rimmon” translates as “pomegranate” in English.

In view of the religious nature of the early pioneers, and what apparently is a great similarity in description between Manchester’s Rock Rimmon and that of the Holy Land, it is likely the name was derived from this source.

The sketchiest legend concerns a lost cave and Indian treasure. Local Indians had allegedly stockpiled a great deal of wealth from trading furs with the white newcomers. When the encroaching growth of settlements forced the Indians to find new hunting lands, they did not want to risk the loss of their riches to other tribes or settlers, so they secreted them in a cave on the Rock and sealed the entrance. The spot was later covered by a landslide. The Indians never returned to reclaim their wealth; it lies there to this day, guarded, some say by a Spirit Chief. Geologically, it is highly unlikely such a cave could exist, but many of those who lived near Rock Rimmon spent a good part of their childhood in the 1920’s and 30’s searching for this fabulous cave.

Of all the tales, only one is possibly verifiable: the mysterious lost profile. In 1925, State Forestry Commissioner John Corliss of Concord discovered a stone face in the ledge while walking through the woods near Coolidge Avenue. Corliss kept his discovery secret for two years before disclosing it to the press. The announcement caused a stir at the time, attracting numerous visitors. Observers said the profile was even better than the famed “Indian Head” in Northern New Hampshire; newspapers predicted it would become as famous as the “Old Man of the Mountains.” Corliss named the face the “Kiwanis Profile” after the club of which he was a member.

Plans were made by the city’s Parks Department to erect a marker near the spot. Citizens discussed setting up facilities to view the formation and promoting it for tourists. Then the clamor, without reason, slowly died out. None of the plans were put into practice, and the profile was forgotten. The strange face remains somewhere in the rock, its location now completely unknown.

The massive ledge of Rock Rimmon, once famous even in Europe as a geologic wonder, now stands scarred with spray-painted graffiti, scarcely visited save by an occasional rock climber. Yet it is still an awesome tribute to nature, and its lore a valuable part of our city’s heritage.