

## GRAVITY HILL

### Mooreville, Indiana

Gravity Hill has long been a source of mystery and curiosity in the Mooreville area. It is said that objects there defy gravity and will roll backwards up the hill.

Location: Head West out of town on High Street (2 blocks South of Main), which becomes State Road 42. Take the first right onto Keller Hill Road, and go approximately 1 mile over a few small hills. Stop when you come to the bigger hill, and you are there.

To test the legend: You can stop your car at the bottom of the big hill, lining up the front with the large old tree on the right, and put it in neutral. Your car **WILL NOT** actually roll up the hill! However, you may feel the sensation of the car backing up the small hill behind you. Or, facing the other direction, your car may appear to roll forward up the small hill. It is much safer to try rolling an object, such as a can, on the hill at the **SIDE** of the road.

**CAUTION!!!** Because of the blind spots created by the hills and the amount and speed of traffic that does pass there, this is **NOT** a safe area to walk around on the road or stop your car. We **CANNOT** recommend parking your car in the road. If you must try it, bring someone to watch for traffic, please don't stay long, and choose a less busy time of day.

A recent email was received by the Mooreville Chamber of Commerce from a curious visitor who tested this mystery. Here is what he said:

*Well, I found Mooreville's renowned Gravity Hill! Actually, it really isn't fair to call it a "hill" but rather maybe just a "knoll." Anyway, I parked my car nearby and asked an old chap for exact directions. He pointed me right up the road to it. Like you suggested, I placed a soda pop can on the hill and to my **astonishment**, the can easily and quickly rolled up the hill! I even slightly pushed the can down the hill. It rolled a few times, stopped, and began rolling back up the hill! I even performed the experiments on both sides of the road, pausing often to allow traffic to pass. My next questions are: "How?" and "Why?" Thanks for your help. Sign me, Astonished in Kokomo, John M.*

While we can't claim to explain it, many locals who have tested and measured the hills say that it is merely an optical illusion. One of the more colorful explanations is the legend that an old (native American) Indian Witch Doctor with magical powers was buried at the foot of Gravity Hill long ago. They say that he was so powerful in life that his energy still emanates from his grave, causing the mysterious occurrences.

Note: Gravity Hill was once profiled on the local PBS (Channel 20) television series "Across Indiana."

This handout provided by the Mooreville Chamber of Commerce and:

*The Academy Building Museum*

250 North Monroe, Mooreville, Indiana 46158, (317)831-9001, [abmuseum@scican.net](mailto:abmuseum@scican.net)

# Keller Hill full of mystery, maybe seawater

By Traci Moyer  
Times Correspondent

## Mooreville

Keller Hill is a place known throughout Morgan County where strange physical occurrences happen that seem to defy the laws of physics and gravity.

Better known as Gravity Hill, Keller Hill is one of the first stops many local people make when looking for a haunted destination.

This spot is a favorite, especially for people trying to convince a skeptic, says Keller Hill resident Harold Lloyd, because once they see a car or basketball roll uphill, they instantly become a believer.

Lloyd has lived at the top of Keller Hill for 21 years.

"Back in the 30's, people in Mooreville would come out here for picnics, and for entertainment, they would watch their car go up the hill," Lloyd said.

If done correctly, a car which has been completely stopped and placed in neutral at the base of the hill can travel in excess of 50 mph over the hills toward Ind. 42 of its own volition.

"It will blow your mind," Lloyd said.

Lloyd tells people an

## Defying Gravity

Keller Hill is located just outside of Mooreville off Indiana 42, which is also East High Street. From Ind. 67, turn right onto Ind. 42. After you cross the bridge, the first right will be Keller Hill Road. Turn right on Keller Hill Road and look for a silver line painted on the asphalt road marking the spot where you should put your

vehicle in neutral. The mysterious force will push/pull your vehicle or any object to the east of the line painted on the pavement. Due to the heavy traffic, residents living in the area advise people to use extreme caution. Visiting the area at night works the best because you can better see the headlights of vehicles traveling in the distance.

old Indian chief is pushing the palefaces off his burial ground, which is hidden somewhere on Keller Hill. Ghosts and goblins have also been given credit for the mysterious happenings.

Area residents Archie and Marilyn Box thought the neighbors were trying to scare them away when they heard the local legends - then they got behind the wheel and put the legend to the test.

Marilyn Box said she was amazed that she was reaching speeds up to 50 mph.

A search of documents at the Indiana State Library regarding Keller Hill turned up another interesting story about the site.

In 1985, Orval Keller, 75, who lived on Keller Hill, gave an oral excerpt about

Mooreville and the mysteries surrounding the hill during his lifetime in the Morgan County Scrap Book Vol. 1 at the Indiana State Library.

According to Keller, there was an oil company by the name of Happy Hollow Oil and Mineral Company that set up at the top of Keller Hill.

For two years, the company drilled for oil, and a man named Gilmer Bray walked from farm to farm selling stock in the company.

Then overnight Keller said the rig was pulled and the two holes were plugged. The reason given to stockholders was that the company had hit sea water.

"And the mystery remains today," Keller said.

visit [www.md-times.com](http://www.md-times.com) for local news

*The Mooreville-Decatur Times,*

*Wednesday, October 31, 2007*



## Gravity Hill attracted crowds in the past; is it for real or an illusion

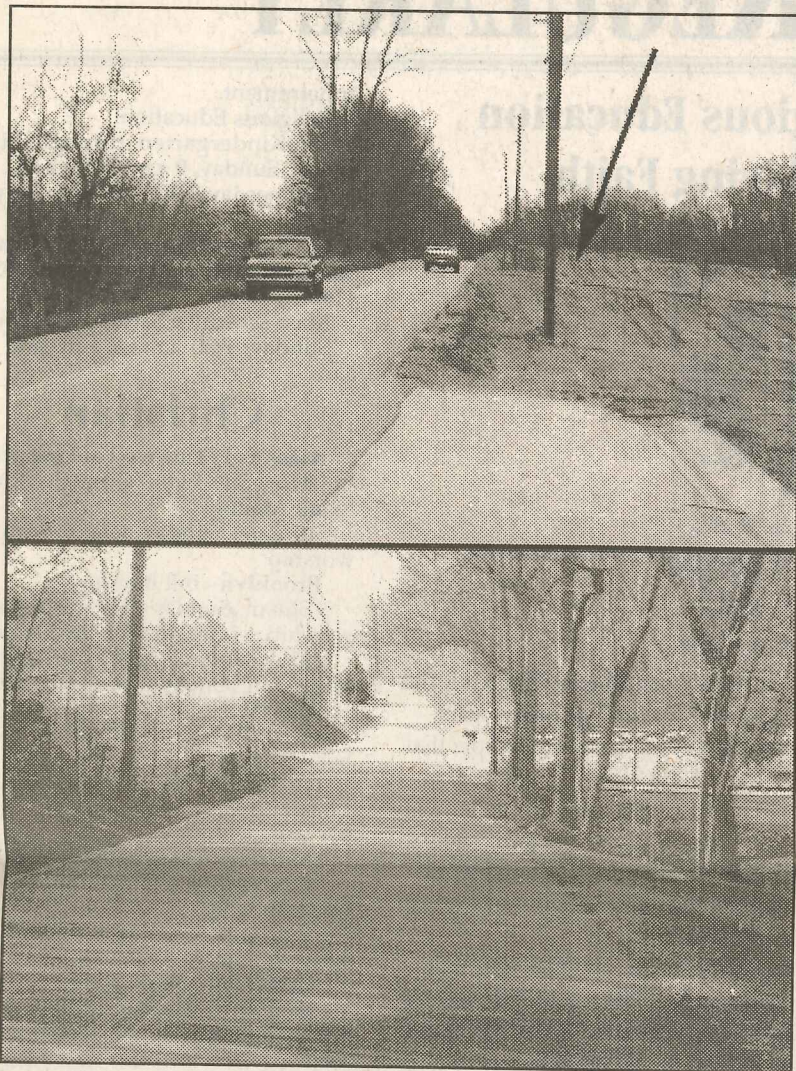


Photo by Jo Foster

Arrow denotes contour of Gravity Hill. Blacktop build up has decreased the depth of the hill over the years.

### By Josephine Foster

Gravity hill, located on Keller Hill Road just Southwest of Mooresville, once was quite the attraction, but the addition of more traffic, on the roads today has sort of pushed the curiosity of the spot back into history.

Gravity Hill or Magnetic Hill, as some call it, was quite the attraction back in the 1920's as some skeptics tried to convince themselves the phenomenon did not exist. But plenty of local area residents have tested the hill over the past 75 years and some are convinced it is in fact a phenomenon.

Some old timers say that back in the 1920s a couple of lovers from Mooresville stopped their Model T on a lovely moonlit night, at the bottom of the hill, in an attempt to catch up on a little

"sparking" but were scared out of their wits when the car suddenly and mysteriously began rolling backward up the hill.

As the word got out many area residents stopped to test the accuracy of the tale and found it to be true. Sure enough, they'd roll slowly back up the hill.

It got so bad at one time, with so many cars flocking to the hill to experience the phenomenon of rolling backwards up the hill, that the local sheriff's office was afraid it would cause a rash of accidents.

Today it would be risky to stop in the middle of Keller Hill Road to test the hill, to prove to yourself if it does or does not work, as Keller Hill Road is heavily traveled and is no longer considered a quiet country road. If you doubt it, take Indiana 42 southwest out of Mooresville approximately a

mile to a crossroads, (Keller Hill Road) turn right and drive 1.1 mile. down the road you will go over a small rise as it approaches the foot of a steep hill. It will drop slightly towards a small ravine at the very bottom before ascending the opposite hill.

Stop your vehicle at a low point of the slight descent and put the car in neutral, (turn off the motor if you so choose) and make certain no car is traveling close behind you. Soon you will find yourself coasting backward, uphill about 5 to 7 mph. It will travel a distance of approximately 50 to 100 feet to the top of the rise. To all outward experiences you will definitely think you are rolling uphill.

I recommend it's best to try this test early in the morning, around 2 to 3 a.m., to eliminate the possibility of an accident. However, this is not a suggestion, and I will emphasize you can test it at your own risk.

The mystery of Gravity Hill was explained by a college professor from Indiana University years ago as an optical illusion. And, I conclude, it seems to defy plausibility and the law of gravity. One would find it hard to convince local area residents that they did not see or feel their car travel backward uphill.

Local folk also proclaim that this hill performs better at midnight. Tales of a huge mass of iron, which was discovered in the hills nearby, seemingly has something to do with the magnetic pull of the vehicles.

The land also has an interesting history, and documents show that the land was deeded to Elias Hadley by President J.Q. Adams in 1827. Hadley later purchased 80

acres surrounding the hill for the mere sum of \$90. The last known Hadley to live on the land was Mrs. R.V. Hadley.

Back in the 30s an article was published about the uncanny phenomenon. An estimated 500 to 1,000 cars flocked to the hill to test its ability to gravitate them backwards up the hill.

There has also been some weird tales about the remarkable effects of Gravity Hill, but none has been proven to be true, other than the fact that it does indeed, seemingly, move your car backwards up the gentle knoll. Perhaps rock formations, the contour of the land and the tilt of the fence posts add flavor to the illusion, but no one has yet proved that this is indeed an illusion.

The photos with today's story were snapped last week and hopefully will be clear enough to denote the gentle rise in the pavement, as many years of added blacktop has erased a portion of the rise.

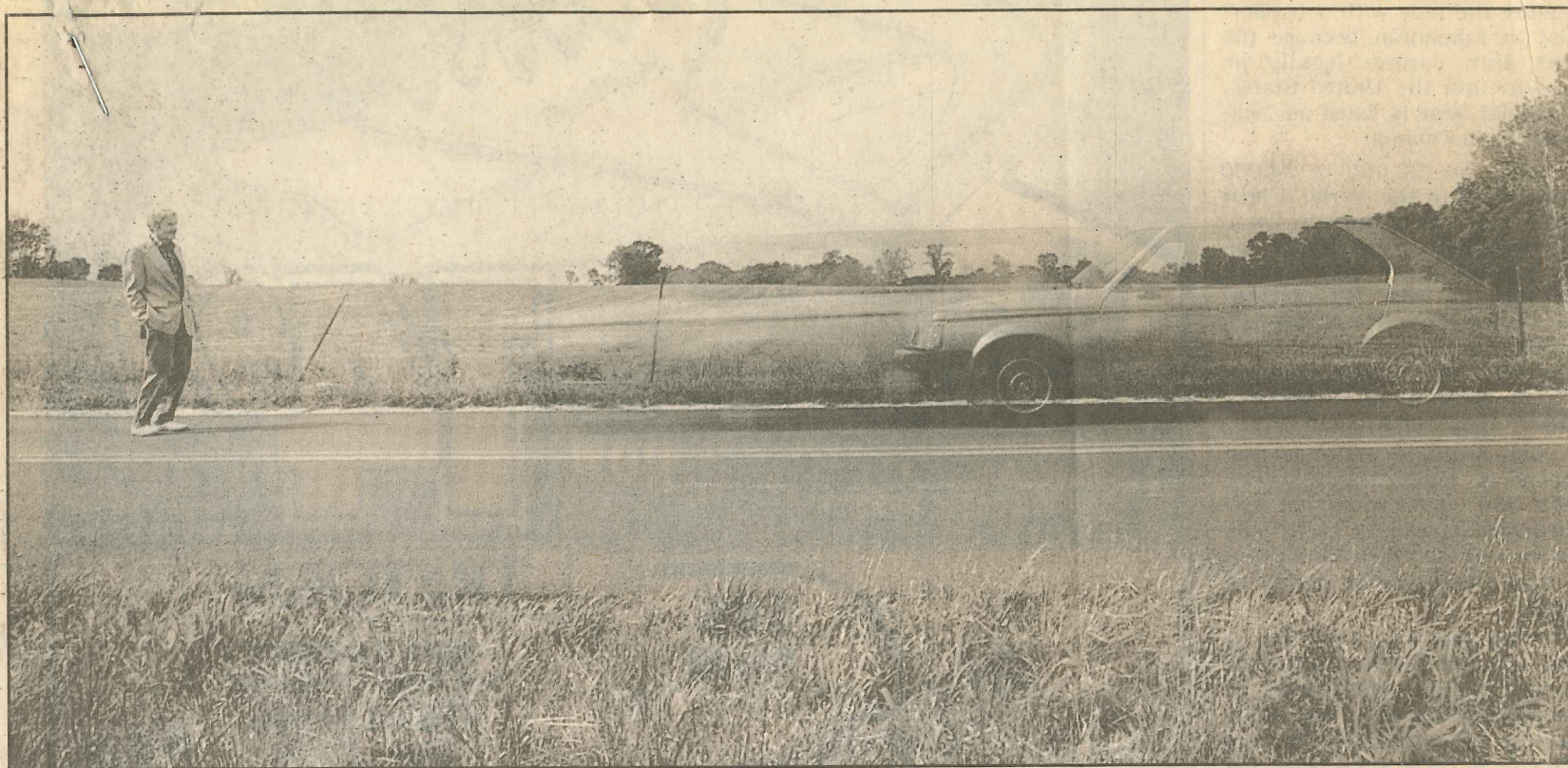
One thing for certain, whether you believe Gravity Hill is an illusion or a phenomenon, it has earned its place in the history books of Morgan County as one of the most widely known places in Mooresville's past.

The I.U. professor believes this is an illusion created primarily by the huge hill in the foreground that simultaneously dominates the perception and gives the impression that you are going up when in fact you are going down.

So, if you have nothing better to do some evening and the late show is a rerun, you can, if you wish, take a drive out Keller Hill Road and make sure there are no other vehicles coming or going as you put the hill to your own test.

Then form your own opinion. Is it for real or is it an illusion?





A two-second exposure reveals the backward motion of an empty car parked at the bottom of "gravity hill" near Mooresville. Rex Redifer, reporter for *The Indianapolis Star*, stands where the car was stopped before it moved, seemingly going up a rise it had just descended.

STAR STAFF PHOTO/FRANK ESPICH

# Gravity

★ Continued from Page 1

mysteriously began rolling backward up the hill.

Word got around, and everyone started stopping cars at the bottom of Kellar's Hill. Sure enough, they'd roll back up.

"That's the story as I got it anyway," says Judith Walls, who lives in a house on the crest of the hill. "I know people been rolling up that hill ever since our family came to live here back in 1942.

"Used to be, when I was a girl, cars would be lined up for blocks waiting their turn. People used to come from all over — from Ohio and Illinois and Kentucky — everywhere just to try out that hill. Far as I know, it always worked."

Her brother, Roscoe Wise, who lives on the far side of the hill, concurs.

"People come here all the time to try it. Happens every time. I never heard of it to fail. Some people said one thing, some another. All I know, it works. You roll uphill."

## If you doubt it . . .

Kellar's Hill Road is no longer off the beaten path. It now is a heavily traveled two-lane road that winds through a busy area. Stopping to try out "gravity hill" should be done with extreme caution. There are no signs to mark the site or to caution oncoming traffic.

But if you doubt, and you're determined to try it, here are the directions:

Go south on Indiana 67 to Mooresville, then take Indiana 42 southwest out of Mooresville about a mile or so until you come to a crossroad (Kellar's Hill Road, but there's no sign). Turn right and drive 1.1 miles. Kellar's Hill is a long and fairly rolling hill. The road goes over a small rise as it approaches the foot of a steep hill, then drops slightly toward a small ravine at the very bottom before ascending the opposite hill.

Drive your car to some low point of the slight descent and either put it in neutral or turn off the motor. The car will begin to coast backward uphill at about 5 to 6 mph. It will go 50 to 100 feet to near the top of the rise.

"To all outward appearances, you would definitely think you

were rolling uphill," conceded Bennet Brabson, the IU professor. "But physicists think in different terms."

## Huge hill creates illusion

Brabson believes the illusion is created primarily by a huge hill in the foreground that dominates the perception and gives the impression that you are "going up" when you are actually "going down."

Adding to the illusion, he said, are factors such as land contour, rock formations and the tilt of telephone poles and fence posts.

Brabson said his conclusion was based on an experiment he conducted about a year ago. Using a weighted line that swung straight down, Brabson placed a person at each end of the rise and measured the visual line of sight from one end of the rise to the other.

Science aside, Don Adams, who teaches history at Mooresville High School, says there are all kinds of stories and conjectures about the hill. "One man got out of his car and urinated to see which way the water flowed.

"Up hill," he said.

"People around here have had a lot of fun with it for years," he says.

Gregory Cash, who lives nearby, says he remembers when he was a boy, "people were always stopping to try out the hill. Back then, it was a gravel road and it worked even better than now. They've thrown a lot of blacktop on it since those days. You used to zip right up that hill backwards."

The local folks also like to say that the hill performs better at midnight. They tell tales about a huge mass of iron, discovered in the hills nearby, that pulls cars uphill toward it.

The land has an interesting history. Judith Walls has documents showing the land originally was deeded by "President J. G. Adams on Jan. 9, 1827 to Elias Hadley, his heirs and assigns forever." Hadley purchased 80 acres surrounding the hill for \$90, according to the quit claim.

The last Hadley to live on the land was Mrs. R.V. Hadley, who in the 1930s, recalled in an article first published about the hill that "there must have been 500 to 1,000 cars come by to try it out."

Roscoe Wise probably said it best when he opined, "Some people have said it's all some kind of optical illusion, but if it is, I can't see it."

# Drivers wonder which way is really up on 'gravity hill' *Insph. Thus 5-28-92 Star*

By REX REDIFER  
STAR STAFF WRITER

Speaking of weird:

There's a little country road just southwest of Mooresville in Morgan County where — get this — if you drive down a hill and stop at the bottom your car will roll backward up the hill.

Disbelieve it? A lot of people do — until they try "gravity hill."

Some call it "magnetic hill." Whatever, it seems to defy plausibility and the laws of gravity.

Skeptics have been trying for years to tell themselves the phenomenon does not exist. But people around Mooresville have been driving down and rolling back up "gravity hill" for nearly 70 years.

The logical explanation is that it is an optical illusion, concluded an Indiana University physics professor who conducted basic experiments there.

But anyone who has rolled "up" the hill will find that mighty hard to believe.



STAR STAFF MAP

"Sure looks like a hill to me," says John Mason, Morgan County highway superintendent. "I've lived around here all my life, and I've never heard any explanation for it."

Back in the 1920s, so the story goes, a pair of Mooresville lovers stopped their Model T one moonlit night at the bottom of Kellar's Hill and were scared half out of their wits when the car

See GRAVITY Page 10





# Mooresville Public Library

220 West Harrison Street

Mooresville, Indiana 46158

831-READ

PAT VAHEY, DIRECTOR

Aug. 30, 1990

[REDACTED] RE: "STRANGE HILL"

Dear Sir

Enclosed are copies of newspaper and magazine clippings dating from 1941 concerning a phenomenon near Mooresville.

Locally this is known as "Magnetic Hill" and a subdivision near the location is named "Magnetic Acres." It has also been referred to as "Gravity Hill."

We hope this is the information you requested.

Would you be kind enough to send us a copy of your article? Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

MOORESVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

*Wanda Potts*

WANDA POTTS, ASS'T TO DIRECTOR

enc. (5)



On any other hill this automobile would roll down of its own weight, but on Gravity Hill it refuses to budge. Buddy and Paula Swisher are pushing with might and main, but can't move it.



# They Repealed the Law of Gravity

**S**IR ISAAC NEWTON, the fellow who developed the law of gravity after an apple fell and conked him on the head, would lose all his equilibrium if he could return and see what goes on at the foot of Kellar's Hill, southwest of Mooresville.

Down at Mooresville, they call the place Gravity Hill. Anti-Gravity Hill would be a better name.

You'd swear that water flows uphill and that an automobile, no matter how much you urge it, won't budge a foot on the down slope if the power is turned off. Going uphill, however, a heavy car will move 50 to 100 feet from a standing start before it stops, defying the law of gravity.

**SOUND IMPOSSIBLE?** Maybe so, but skeptics have been trying for years to tell themselves that this phenomenon does not exist and they haven't succeeded. The law of gravity continues to take a back seat despite all explanations to the contrary.

If you doubt the truth of this account, you can arrange a convincing demonstration very simply.

Follow Ind. 67 southwest to Mooresville and then take

Ind. 42 to the right for about one mile. A gravel road angling due west, which leaves Ind. 42 opposite a blacktop pavement going south, leads to Kellar's Hill. The distance to the foot of the hill is one and two-tenths miles.

**KELLAR'S HILL** is long and steep and high. The highway goes over a small rise as it approaches the foot of the hill and then drops slightly toward a small ravine. This makes the approach something like a letter V lying on its side, with one prong nearly horizontal and the other tending toward the vertical.

Drive your car to the lowest point of this slight descent and turn off the motor. You will begin to coast backward—uphill—continuing slowly for 50 to 100 feet, depending on the condition of your car and the state of the highway.

**IF THIS** demonstration doesn't convince you, get out and push. It's easy to push the car uphill; nothing to it. But try to push it downhill and you'll groan and strain and get nowhere. Probably, you'll lose ground.

The last time a newspaper story appeared about Gravity Hill, the traffic grew so heavy the following Sunday that the Morgan County sheriff had to come over from Martinsville to untangle it.

R. D. Sellars, who lives down the road from the hill—or up the road, depending on your reckoning and amount of skepticism—has been in the neighborhood for 56 years.

"Cars jammed the road for four Sundays after that last story," he recalled, "and they came from 13 states."

**SELLARS SAYS** that people hauled hundreds of gallons of water to the site and poured it in the road just to watch it run uphill. A lot of them still wouldn't believe what they saw.

People would drive out at all hours of the day and night to see this phenomenon and Sellars hopes that he won't have repeat calls of people asking at midnight for directions to the hill.

Mrs. V. S. Hadley, who resides on Ind. 42 at the Kellar Hill Road, says that there must have been 500 to 1,000 cars there the last time the public read about gravity's disappearing act. Stirred up

quite a bit of dust, too, she says.

The local folk have quite a sense of humor about their hill and they are not above spinning yarns about its performing better at midnight and about a huge mass of iron discovered 10 feet down that pulls the cars uphill toward it.

**O**BVIOUSLY, THE whole story is a tricky illusion and one surveyor found that the "low" spot of the hill actually is 18 inches above the "high" spot.

This explanation, the most logical of all, should make Sir Isaac rest a little more easily.

—R.S.S. ★ ★ ★



# CARS ROLL UPHILL AT MOORESVILLE

Continued from Page 1, Part 1

the steering wheel. "The motor's shut off, too."

So the correspondent tried it himself. He backed his car to the foot of the steep hill, pulled to a well-worn shoulder, turned off the ignition and waited for something to happen. The car was headed east, and it coasted a couple of feet downhill and then started climbing the slight grade. The gravel was thick, and there was every reason to believe it would be sufficient to halt the car despite the mysterious pull. But the car just waded through the gravel and nearly reached the top of the grade before it stopped.

He started to pull on the emergency brake as he turned off the motor.

"You don't need your brake," said Lane. "It won't roll back."

And it didn't.

"Now push it uphill," said Lane.

This, under ordinary circumstances, would have been a task the reporter would have shunned, particularly in view of the fact you don't get a lot of muscle pounding a typewriter. But he put one hand on the car, pushed firmly—and the car went up hill.

"Try pushing it downhill," said Lane.

The correspondent's feet dug into the gravel, and he pushed with both hands. The rear wheels just rocked a little, and the car stayed put.

Mrs. Ella Bennett, 1144 South Kealing avenue, was there with a group of women.

"I've been out here four times," said Mrs. Bennett. "Once we coasted all the way to the blacktop paving. (A mile or so away.)"

It was Lane's first trip to the scene.

"I wouldn't believe it," he said. "And even when I see my car coast uphill, I still don't believe it."

Some women were looking around for some explanation.

"This is John Dillingers country," one of them said. "Don't suppose he's got anything to do with it, do you?"

Legend has it that the reverse pull is stronger at midnight, but we'll leave that for some one else to investigate. We have seen enough to know it will take a scientist to explain it, and then perhaps he will communicate with the ghost of Isaac Newton.

## Powerless Cars Coast Uphill

But They Won't Go Down—Phenomenon Near  
Mooreville Puzzles Motorists



By ORIENT W. FIFER, Jr.

The News Staff Correspondent

MOORESVILLE, Ind., Aug. 29.—

Strange things happen at the foot of Keller's hill west of this town.

Automobiles roll uphill with the ignition shut off, and yet they will not roll downhill. You can push a car upgrade with one hand, but you will shove mightily to start it downhill.

Sound silly? Well, drive out and try it yourself; that is, if you don't mind the dust from a gravel road and an occasional traffic jam. For the fame of the hill, which is now being called Gravity hill, is spreading rapidly. On some evenings

twenty or thirty cars will be trying out this phenomenon that seems to defy the law of gravitation.

Your correspondent was skeptical when he first heard about it, so he drove out Road 67 to Mooreville, then traveled one mile southwest on Road 42 before slanting to the right on a gravel road that leads directly to Keller's hill.

The first thing he saw was a sedan backing up a low grade that leads to the foot of Keller's hill.

"Is the car in gear?" he asked the driver.

"Nope," said Donald Lane, 2935 North Dearborn street, who was at

Continued on Page 15, Part 1



# McKinzie "Levels" Hill's Dizzy Doings

STAR,

## Local Man "Proves" Cars Coast Downhill On Up-Grade—Whoa!

Thomas McKinzie, 1666 Naomi street, an employe of Hibben, Hollweg & Co., here, is a level-headed man.

He heard a report that very strange things were happening down Mooresville way. For instance, he heard that ordinary automobiles were coasting uphill—not downhill—on Keller's hill southwest of town.

Others have heard the same tale and have had a lot of fun going out Ind. 42 from Mooresville to the southwest and then on to the right and Keller's hill.

Mr. McKinzie said that, to be sure, the hill appears to slant the wrong way—that you can drive your car onto the hill, shut off the motor and appear to coast uphill. But he didn't stop there. He took a level—a common carpenter's level—along. He placed it on the hill. And sad to the hearts of those who have strange solutions for the erstwhile mystery, the level showed plainly that what appears to be an upgrade is in fact a downgrade and what appears to be a downgrade is in fact turn about.

He said that the surrounding hills, in their relationship to the roadway, do the fooling. He had the words "optical illusion" to wind up his report.



We hear considerable rumor about automobiles coasting up hill these days. Personally we haven't tried it; but at the foot of Keller Hill, it is said that a car will coast for a few feet in what seems to be an uphill direction eastward.

\* \* \* \* \*

You might try it sometime, however don't make too much noise as it seems to bother Keller Kitchen's sleep in his summer cabin nearby.

taken from The Mooresville Times  
August 14, 1941

It is estimated that over 5,000 persons "tried-out" Keller Hill during the two-day holiday. It was just like Old Settlers without the Hotdog stand and pink lemonade-almost as much fun too from the stories that were circulating. The excitement that a little fire can cause on a hot night is terrific!

taken from The Mooresville Times  
September 4, 1941

Rumor around town has it that several have been trying out the "magnetic hill". Could anyone tell us if it really works?

taken from The Mooresville Times  
August 21, 1941

We almost forgot to mention that according to surveys the magnetic hill is really an optical illusion. Isn't that a relief after thirty years to have the question settled.

taken from The Mooresville Times  
August 28, 1941