

WESTERN ESCAPE:

Elevating Regional Entertainment to Experience Parks by Integrating Escape Room Techniques

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Abstract

Western Escape:
Elevating Regional Entertainment to Experience Parks by Integrating Escape Room Techniques

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This thesis lays the groundwork for the evolution of the escape room concept through an expanded guest narrative, multiple locations, and greater guest immersion. Guests have been entertained by the escape room experience for almost 20 years. The real-world versions having been inspired by the “Escape the Room” genre of video games, as well as aspects of interactive theater, haunted houses, and scavenger hunts. Escape rooms proved the financial viability of mid budget regional themed entertainment. In this thesis, I describe a project that would expand the escape room idea into a guest narrative that could succeed as a regional theme park. Inspiration for how this could be completed comes from preexisting examples inside theme parks as well as the genres of interactive theater and modern escape rooms.

Keywords

Themed Entertainment, Escape Rooms, Experience Parks, Theme Park, Master planning,

Thesis Paper

Western Escape: Elevating Regional Entertainment to Experience Parks by Integrating Escape Room Techniques

Introduction

In 1955 the opening of Disneyland changed the expectations of the American audience. Amusement parks had existed in the United States for over 100 years at that time¹, but always as a collection of diverse rides. Disneyland introduced the concept of a true theme park to the American audience and forever changed its expectations. While Tivoli Gardens opened in the 1840's² and enticed its attendees by creating a themed Oriental world, in 1955, the idea of creating an immersive environment for guest to inhabit was relatively new to Americans. As with any successful new idea, imitation Disneylands were soon to follow, and regional themed parks sprouted up around the United States. However, lacking Walt Disney's budget, vision, platform, and intellectual properties, these regional themed opportunities met with varying degrees of success. Those designers who found ways to compromise in either scale, narrative, or location were able to overcome these constraints, but most succumbed to longevity.

Since the opening of Disneyland, the world has experienced an unimagined evolution of interactive storytelling. Most prominently in the form of video games. Game designers built upon the lessons learned in theme park architecture, to create highly detailed environments that users are encouraged to explore virtually. As with any other industry, entertainment is also cyclical, and it was only a matter of time before these games were being recreated in the real world as interactive experiences, most prominently in escape rooms, from the popular "Escape the Room" style of video games. Escape rooms create a small-scale themed environment, in the

¹ The first American amusement park was Lake Compounce in Bristol, CT. Like many, it was originally a picnic park that initially added boating and then other amusements.

² Tivoli Gardens opened in 1846. It was themed in Oriental buildings and attractions - as the Orient held popular interest at the time - but the first Amusement Park in Europe was nearby Dyrehavsbakken which opened in 1583.

form of one or two adjacent rooms, that guests explore as they are challenged by a series of puzzles which must be solved for their “escape.” What these rooms lack in scale, they make up for with narrative and interactivity. While massively popular with a wide range of audiences, they more notably proved that themed entertainment is feasible for small business at a regional level. While escape rooms experienced a moment in the American zeitgeist, they do have a fatal flaw that limits their growth potential. Unlike a rollercoaster that can be enjoyed time after time, individual escape rooms reveal their secrets in a single adventure thereby denying the owner operators any profit from repeatability. Therefore, escape rooms that cost anywhere from \$7,000 to \$50,000 are constantly looking for a new audience in a limited area.

In this thesis, I will look at how the theme park and escape room can coalesce, into the placemaking and scale of theme parks with the interactive narratives found in escape rooms, and thereby create an experience park with a variety of guest interaction and therefore returnability. This is a proposal to create a rich storied environment, for guests to make individual choices that drive their own narrative and solve intellectual and skilled based challenges to promote an interest in history hidden in entertainment, and ultimately personal pride.

Precedent

History of Western towns

In the mid 1950's, following the success of Disneyland and the rise in popularity of cowboy culture on the large and small screen, savvy businessmen began to create regional themed experiences set in the old west. These "Western towns" arose as small scale regional themed parks. Typically, half day parks, offering guests the opportunity to explore the shops, interact with actors in character, and witness live shows both on the stage and in the street, usually reenacting shoot outs. Western town experiences sprouted up around the United States. The guest narrative surrounding these parks was fairly consistent. When the businesses were fortunate enough to be established in towns with real western history, like Tombstone, AZ, Dodge City, KS, or Cody, WY, they drew upon this history as inspiration for the live shows. For example, in Tombstone, AZ guests can witness Doc Holiday, Wyatt Earp, and Virgil Earp shoot it out with the Clantons and McLaurys on the site of the actual O.K. Corral three times a day. In these locations the guest narratives and experience stay very closely tied to history. However, for the parks without this history, often located on the East Coast, designers resorted to a more generic version of the West. These parks existed to varied levels of success throughout the rest of the 1950's however a cultural shift took place across the United States entering into the 1960's, with President Kennedy speech entering the US into the 'Space Race', American's interest shifted and science fiction became the new hot genre on television. This change also effected American's preference for all their entertainment, and these parks so tied to the genre were left in the past. Some have been able to survive, however often by compromising their pure western theme.

History of Escape Rooms

Inspired by the “Escape the Room” genre of video games, the first concept that would be recognizable as a modern escape room, premiered to the general public at GENCON in Indianapolis in 2003. “True Dungeon” was created by Jeff Martin, originally branded as a role-playing adventure, this experience consisted of the main elements found in modern escape rooms, teams of four to eight players exploring a themed environment and solving puzzles together. However, the concept didn’t begin to take its final form until 2007, when a Japanese publishing company called *Scraps Co*³. began to produce, “Real Escape Games,” as a physical version of the popular video games. The escape room concept made its way to the United States in 2012, when *Real Escape Games*⁴ opened in San Francisco. Escape rooms quickly grew into a cultural phenomenon, as of 2019 there were over 2,300 escape room venues in the United States alone and over 10,000 venues around the world⁵.

Interactive Theme Parks and Legends of Frontierland

The concept of live action role playing theme parks, has been around for decades, popularized by the 1973 film *Westworld*. In the film, theme parks guests are given free will to interact with the android citizens of the three themed lands, including the titular western themed “Westworld.” This idea has inspired designers, as the optimum level of immersion even if the realities make it unachievable. However, in 2014 Disneyland took a step in this direction when they debuted the trial of ‘Legends of Frontierland, Gold Rush⁶.’ The live action role play game, hosted by Disneyland Cast Members, saw guests align themselves with the citizens of

³ <http://www.kyoto-creative.jp/en/>

⁴ <https://realescapegame.com>

⁵ (<https://www.economist.com/gulliver/2019/01/11/the-escape-room-games-industry-is-booming>)

⁶ <https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2014/07/legends-of-frontierland-gold-rush-begins-today-at-disneyland-park/>

Frontierland or the neighboring Rainbow Ridge townfolks as they competed for land. Guests were encouraged to create their own characters and interact with the people and locations of the world. The game even went as far as creating their own in-game currency, called “bits”. This currency was earned by completing tasks and could be used to buy land or other goods in-game. This open framework allowed guests the opportunity to create their own parts of the story, for example some guests created their own businesses or street shows, while others went as far as having their characters get married in game⁷. “Legends of Frontierland: Gold Rush” lasted for three months before it was concluded by Disney. While guest reaction seemed to be positive, there may have been problems because similar experience has returned to Disney parks.

Experience Parks and Evermore

A relatively recent addition to the theme park industry is the development of the “experience park.” Functioning as a small scale, highly themed and completely immersive experience. The first project to identify by the moniker was the *Star Trek: The Experience* that ran in the Las Vegas Hilton from 1998 to 2008. Within the experience guests were visitors of a “Future Museum” before boarding one of two themed simulator attractions and ended with a trip to “Quark’s bar” from *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. The bar was inhabited by actors in character who brought the experience to life for the guests.

The idea of the “experience park” has recently been expanded upon by the opening of *Evermore Park*⁸ outside Provo, Utah. Designed as a landscape to inhabit “Live Action Role Play”⁹ *Evermore* allows guests to create their own characters and interact with actors who fill out the fantasy world. Guests are called “World Walkers” and they enter into a world of fantasy and

⁷ <https://www.micechat.com/78929-legends-of-frontierland-fun-in-the-frontier-and-an-extension/>

⁸ <https://blooloop.com/experience-park-concept-immersive/>

⁹ live action role-playing: a fantasy role-playing game in which participants dress in costume, use props, and act out roles.

magic. Attractions range from stage shows, haunted houses, archery, and ax throwing all while completing quests or merely exploring what the park has to offer.

During the development of *Evermore*, two of its founders Ken Bretschneider and Curtis Hickman realized they needed to develop a line of funding to keep the project going. Necessity being the mother of invention, their solution revolutionized the landscape of experience design with, *The VOID*¹⁰. A combination of virtual reality and physical spaces, *The VOID* allows guests to enter in to the highly themed digital worlds of their favorite franchises to complete missions. Guests wear virtual reality (VR) glasses and a haptic vest and are set free to explore their surroundings. What in reality are bare walls covered in sensors, appear to the guests as expansive worlds filled with ghosts, super heroes, and space wizards. What makes *The VOID* revolutionary to VR is the guests' ability to physically interact with the world around them and have that experience translate to what they see in their glasses. They can interact with walls and doorways, before picking up physical objects or push buttons that all correlate to actions inside of their fantasy world. This technology frees game designers from the realities of our world, all while working inside of the foot print of the average escape room.

Gamifying Themed Experiences and Galaxy's Edge

Since the 1990s guests have been able to interact with theme park attractions, sometimes even scoring points in the process. However, with the opening of *Galaxy Edge* at Disneyland and Disney World, Imagineers revolutionized how guests are able to interact with the fantasy world around them. The primary example being the simulator attraction, *Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run*. Before boarding their ride vehicle, guests are assigned to one of six roles on the ship, each requiring its own set of tasks throughout the attraction. These tasks range from the

¹⁰ <https://www.thevoid.com/>

Pilots flying the Falcon, to gunners firing on incoming enemies, to the lowly engineers performing basic repairs. All of these behaviors are taken into account as you are graded and rewarded at the end of the ride. However, by completing these tasks, guests earn “bits” which have a larger connection to the themed land. Inside the MyDisneyExperience app, guests can access a “datapad” that gamifies objects and set dressing throughout Galaxy’s Edge. These puzzle-based games can be initiated by scanning QR codes or by mere proximity and turns the land in to a giant game of risk, as guests serving either the Rebels or Empire fight for control of the land. Completing the puzzles also unlock small pieces of dialogue that is being intercepted by the guest. These snippets create an added layer of detail for the guests that go looking for it. Unfortunately, in its current application anything won or lost stays squarely inside the app, and besides a few inconsequential audio-visual recognitions, doesn’t have any real world effect on the land.

Historical Considerations

As a catalyst for the story, design, and placemaking of the regional experience park, I have integrated historical figures into the park's narrative. However, the design intent for this experience is not to create a living history museum¹¹, so the following historical figures will instead be treated as characters of historical fiction¹² within the context of the park. It is my intent to not recreate these figures as fiction, but instead to create a fictional situation what will introduce these illustrious men who lived contemporaneously.

The Rough Riders

The Rough Riders was a nickname given to the 1st United States Volunteer Cavalry in the Spanish-American War¹³. Formed by President McKinley after the sinking of USS Maine in 1898 in Havana Harbor.

The original plan called for the regiment to be composed of frontiersmen from the western territories. However, after Theodore Roosevelt resigned from his post as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, to join the volunteer Cavalry as a Lieutenant Colonel, his attachment attracted an odd mixture of Ivy League athletes, glee club singers, active and retired law enforcement, cowboys, and Native Americans. The regiment received so many applications that they had to turn away willing volunteers. All accepted had to be skilled horsemen and eager to see combat. The Rough Riders are best remembered for their bravery during the Battle of San Juan Hill on July 1st 1898. The battle proved to be a fatal wound to the Spanish troops, and by the middle of August the Spanish fleet sailed from Cuba, and an armistice was signed, ending the

¹¹ A living history museum is a museum that recreates historical settings to replicate past time periods. <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-a-living-museum.html>

¹² the genre of literature, film, etc., comprising narratives that take place in the past and are characterized chiefly by an imaginative reconstruction of historical events and personages.

¹³ <https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/roughriders.html>

fighting. Upon returning to New York, the cavalry was told of their disbandment. The sense of community and comradery transcended the war and the first reunion was celebrated in Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1899¹⁴.

Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch

Born Robert LeRoy Parker in the Utah territory in 1866, Butch Cassidy was a notorious American outlaw. After his release from prison in 1896, where he was serving time for stealing horses, Cassidy began to associate with a wider group of other criminals. Together they formed “The Wild Bunch”, a name which was itself also stolen, and set out robbing banks. With the Sundance Kid, Harry Alonzo Longabaugh, as Cassidy’s right hand man, the gang had moderate success with their strategy of non-violent heists and escaping separately. But in 1899, Cassidy and the Wild Bunch became notorious when they robbed the Union Pacific’s Overland Flyer, leading to a massive manhunt that would follow Cassidy and Sundance, in different forms, for the rest of their life’s. By 1901, after more bank and train robberies, a failed amnesty plea, and relentless pursuit by Pinkerton agents; Butch Cassidy, Sundance, and Etta Place, Sundance’s partner, depart from New York for Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Not much is known about Cassidy and Sundance’s time in South America. It was assumed that Cassidy and Sundance left America to attempt to live a more traditional lifestyle. However, it is believed they were ultimately drawn back into a life of crime. According to legend, in 1908 a courier carrying a payroll was robbed by two American bandits, believed to be Cassidy and Sundance, in Southern Bolivia. Witnesses identified the culprits a few days later,

¹⁴ Los Angeles Herald, 1899 <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=LAH18990625.2.2&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>

and the Argentinian military was called, resulting in a shootout leading to the death of the Americans.

However, like most legends, Cassidy's story does not end with his "death." It long has been rumored that Cassidy was seen back in the United States before his eventual "death" in 1934 of pneumonia in the Pacific Northwest. These claims have been researched by forensic scientists on multiple occasions and across continents, and have yet to receive a positive DNA match with any of Cassidy's surviving descendants, leaving his fate a mystery.

Tesla in Colorado City

Arriving in 1899, Serbian inventor Nikola Tesla made his way to Colorado Springs, CO to conduct high altitude experiments. He told local reporters that he was attempting to study wireless telegraphy experiments in a quest to send a radio transmission from Pikes Peak across the Atlantic Ocean to Paris, France. However, his presence there was a little more dangerous than he let on publicly. His real motive was to experiment with high voltage and high frequency electricity to transmit electricity wirelessly. It was reported at the time that people in the neighboring communities witnessed electricity jumping from the ground to their feet, lightbulbs glowing even when turned off, and damage to a power dynamo over six miles away.

Tesla left his laboratory a year later in 1900, and by 1904 the facility was dismantled to settle his debts in the area. It is now known that Tesla was doing preliminary trials for his planned, but never funded, Wardenclyffe Tower project intended for the city of Shoreham, NY, at the east end of Long Island.

Design Proposal

Backstory

The year is 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt has just been elected. As he goes about his campaign promise of “trust busting” on the East Coast, he comes to the conclusion that western gangs can no longer go unchecked. While US Marshalls, Pinkerton, and local authorities have had moderate success, there are certain situations where they have not sufficiently restrained gang activity, to the detriment of the honest citizens. As the Federal government begins to solidify throughout the western frontier, it becomes all the more paramount that their assets be protected. To achieve this, federal agents would need to be familiar with the territory, courageous, athletic, and well educated. Luckily Roosevelt knew just the people for the job and decided to brand this federal agency as the New Rough Riders. Made up of select individuals from the recently disbanded cavalry unit of the same name, these agents will travel in private rail cars and use espionage tactics as they fight outlaw activity throughout the west.

Their first mission will see them go face to face with Butch Cassidy, Sundance, and the Wild Bunch. When securely barricaded inside their camp located in the Hole-in-the-Wall pass in Jackson County, Wyoming, this gang was impossible to infiltrate, Pinkerton has sent spies to varying degrees of success. The gang only makes infrequent excursions to the neighboring hills to rob banks and trains. While not particularly dangerous, they are enterprising with their operation and are looking to grow, and rumor has it that Butch Cassidy, a man known for big ideas, has his eye on some shockingly new forms of technology to help make that happen. President Roosevelt’s spies say that Butch Cassidy and Sundance have been keenly observing Nikola Tesla’s experiments in Pike’s Pass, CO, however the field agent sent to do initial reconnaissance has disappeared.

Agents, will meet up with a unit of Rough Riders who have already made camp in Pike's Pass. Today you will travel by commercial rail, but do not fear as we will not be sending you in uninformed. Our Quartermaster has a surprise communication awaiting you aboard the train on your journey up the mountain. However, be careful and ever vigilant, for we fear Butch Cassidy is already on his way, and we have heard he can be both charming and deadly.

Story Reasoning

I have taken a few creative liberties with history, so this story squarely lives in the alternative history genre. While conceptualizing this project, I felt that I needed to find a significant enough reason for this story to happen, and Nikola Tesla filled that requirement.

According to history, Tesla was actually conducting his high-altitude experiments with wireless electrical and telegraphy outside Colorado Springs from 1899 to 1900. This was where I took the first liberty, I have extended Tesla's stay into 1901 to better correspond with Roosevelt's election. The presence of Tesla in our story however provides a theatrical "McGuffin"¹⁵ large enough to justify all this activity. It also creates a level of plausibility for guests when it comes to finding story justifications for the use of communication devices and electricity needed to make a large-scale Escape Room practical. The in universe rational to these anachronisms, is that Tesla has paid to electrify the town to appease the citizens in exchange for the difficulties created by his presence. All guests will be provided with a "short range communication device" to aid guests, should they get stumped on their missions. These devices will also interact with (See Figure 4) The in-game justification for these tools, will involve Tesla

¹⁵ an object or device in a movie or a book that serves merely as a trigger for the plot.

aiding the Rough Riders in the search for Cassidy, but not before Sundance could steal some devices for their own use.

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were chosen to serve as the antagonist because of their place in history as sympathetic villains, due in part to their favorable portrayals by Paul Newman and Robert Redford in the 1969 film, “Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.” Furthermore, this time period in Butch Cassidy and Sundance’s lives was not well documented, so their appearance in Colorado Springs and the surround area in this time period would not be directly contradictory. With guests’ prior knowledge to the characters, favorable impression, and their image as non-violent criminals, it is imaginable that some guests could find themselves sympathetic for Butch and Sundance, and excitedly opting into the outlaw narrative.

Guest Experience

Upon arrival at the off-site ticket and boarding station, all guests are theoretically enlisted into the Rough Riders. Every trip begins the same, with guests receiving instructions from the Rough Riders on the train midway through the train ride to Pike’s Pass, (See Figure 2) the site of the park. However, before arriving in town Guests will be given their first story choice, as Butch Cassidy boards your train and asks for volunteers to join his Wild Bunch gang. This first decision will drastically alter the way guests experience the town and surrounding property.

While guests following the Rough Riders, objective are participating in tasks that are productive in nature, the Wild Bunch route has guests partaking in puzzles of a more destructive nature. However, while these stories overlap, guests’ experiences will not be prohibitedly affected by the actions of the guests working on the other side.

Due to the expansive nature, layered puzzles, and different routes, this park is designed to engage guests through multiple skill levels and visits.

Intent

The design intent behind creating an “escape room” format experience in an expansive space like this, is to allow the possibility for guests to continue to interact and explore the location even after their initial narrative has been resolved. With the dueling narratives and story paths of either “Rough Rider” or “Wild Bunch” a park like this could launch with upward of twenty hours of multiplying gameplay narrative. Alleviating the single play nature of “escape Rooms” and proving the high level of narrative modern audiences have grown to expect from themed experiences.

Location

Set inside the fictional town of Pikes Pass, Western Escape seeks to create a rich living environment for guests to explore. The design intent is for Pike’s Pass to be a cacophony of visual noise. Everything the guests sees or hears could be either simultaneously setting up or paying off a puzzle. These details could be present in the shop windows, hanging as laundry across the street, or found by researching or asking “locals” questions. Additionally, the presence of a character like Nikola Tesla in town presents the opportunity for these puzzles to occasionally inherit a science fiction tone. Pike’s Pass is situated in a remote location that is conveniently located directly on the trainline. This remote location also allows for the guest narratives to spill out into the neighboring hiking trails, further expanding the area needed to cover while simultaneously driving narrative.

Interactives

Inspired by espionage techniques utilized by spies throughout time, the puzzles will test guests on both a physical and mental level. Starting simply to introduce guests to how the land operates, the puzzles will grow with the guest's skill levels. Furthermore, the intent of some of the puzzles is to challenge guests with life skills that have become antiquated in their modern lives. Objectives like sending or receiving and reading Morse code from the telegraph office, utilizing the Dewey decimal system to find books in the library, or saddling a horse, could provide guests with a sense of accomplishment or pride. All while teaching guests a skill, or an experience they can relate to in history class.

Considerations

There are some realities of modern escape rooms that will need to be reimaged for an experience like this in order for it to be playable for the widest variety of guests. In modern escape rooms there are employees watching guests at all time, ready to answer questions with clues. This fundamental aspect of escape rooms has to be translated to the realities of this location and time while remaining in theming. Tesla's inclusion in the narrative is partially to meet this constraint. As a solution, it is proposed that all groups of guests will be receiving a "proprietary" spy communicator during their briefing on the train. This device will allow all guests, no matter their story path, the opportunity to seek help. These devices could also be used to aid in the completion of other tasks throughout the park. It is the intent to have these devices returned at the end of guests visits.

Another consideration when releasing guests into such an expansive space with limited locations, is the order and timing of their arrivals at certain locations central to the stories. While some locations, like the hotel and telegraph's office, will allow for multiple parties to operate

privately in duplicate rooms when space allows, other smaller locations will have to get more creative to alleviate bottlenecks. Some suggestions for relieving guest congestion, would be to send guests to a variety of starting points upon arrival to Pike's Pass. While the narrative remains the same, the order in which the guest retrieves the information could vary. An alternative solution is to subtly schedule guests' arrivals at locations. The in-universe narrative explanation for this behavior could revolve around when a spy can meet with your group at any given location, and given the variable nature of the puzzles, they will still be able to progress on other aspects while they wait.

Variability

Should guests be arriving for a repeat experience, in typical spy fashion should they share a predetermined code word with the conductor on the train, they will receive a briefing consistent with their place in the story. Furthermore, the living nature of the experience park could allow for seasonal overlays or episodic storytelling, driving repeat guest interactions over an extended time.

Conclusion

During the creative process, I have tried to keep this project conceptual. I did not want to create a list of exactly how this park would work and limit it from the possibility of growing into all the ways it could work. I believe the concept of an escape room experience park is infinitely applicable to themes and regions.

Through the implantation of gamified content, park operators would be able to create the elements of variability, returnability, and repeatability, needed to drive guest interaction while supporting and enhancing the local economy.

I believe this concept would flourish in a location driven by tourism, like Lake George, NY, St. Augustine, FL or Gatlinburg, TN, where people congregate for vacation, that could not otherwise sustain a larger scale regional attraction.

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Images



Figure 1: Pike's Pass Town Map



Figure 2: On Train Mission Briefing



Figure 3: Pike's Pass Commons



Figure 4: Tesla's Influence on Pike's Pass



Figure 5: Hotel Room with a View



Figure 6: City Hall and Zebulon Theater



Figure 7: Tesla's Workshop



Figure 8: Mysteries in the Mountains

Appendix A: Guest Narrative Programming

- Arriving at Parking Lot
- Buying tickets and boarding train
- Each group will receive a private cabin
 - Code message to conductor to signal conductor you are a repeat guest
 - You choose a new mission or are there to complete your previous mission
- During scenic ride to western town, windows shut, lights turn down, projection prerecorded message lights up wall
 - Mission briefing is from “Rough Riders”
 - You are warned of the “Wild Bunch” and Butch Cassidy’s presence in town
- 5 – 10 mins before arrival, the “Wild Bunch” stops and boards the train
- Guest has the option to Join the Gang or stay and work with the Rough Riders

“Rough Riders” Path

- Arrival in town
- Follow directions from mission briefing to unique first destination
- Solve puzzles and explore

“Wild Bunch” Path

- Arrival in Cave
- Receive briefing from Butch and Sundance
- Part of your mission is to intercept messages and steal technology
- Make way to town through woods and cemetery to begin solving puzzles

Appendix B: High Concept Narrative

Locations

Train – Contains two different programming spaces. The primary purpose is the guest cabins, designed to seat 7-10 people, to create a sense of personal adventure for the groups. Cabins will receive individual treatment and missions on their trip up to the park site. While the train will make continuous trips back and forth between the park site and parking lot, there will be another stationary train set parked in the depot at our park site. These train cars will operate as the “Rough Riders” mobile headquarter walk through attraction. Guests will be given the opportunity to meet our Rough Rider agents, portrayed by actors, and introduced to their spy gadgets, as well as ask any pertinent questions.

Cave – After departing the train with the “Wild Bunch” guest will be escorted to the gang’s hideout in the cave. Here they will receive a new briefing from Butch Cassidy and Sundance.

Bank – Located on the main street, inside guests will use found keys to unlock lock boxes containing clues. Guests will also be able to interact with bank tellers in ways that could further progress the story.

Library – Inside the library guests will have the opportunity to do some light research for puzzles that might have them stumped. Guests will be able to request books about certain topics that could be Clues and information might also be hidden inside books. For example, guests will have to use the Dewey decimal system to find books related to their cases.

Bar – Inside guests will find a fully functional bar, containing a stage show and live music. A good place to relax and take in the environment. However, the bartenders and piano man will

also be a part of the games, and actions can be triggered by sharing codes with them. Lyrics to the songs could also be intertwined with the narrative. But be careful, bars are sure to attract agents from both sides.

School House – Hidden in plain sight the school house is a front for Butch and the Wild Bunch gang. Inside guests following the gang's path will be able to interact with Etta Place, the alleged girlfriend of Sundance. She'll be able to assist or provide suggestions to struggling gang members.

Woods – Located on the outskirts of town, the expansive woods offer guests an opportunity to explore and hike. Through the course of some puzzles, guests might be lead through the woods by the help of a compass and some clues. The woods will be adjacent to the path to the cave hide out for the Wild Bunch gang.

Stable – The stable keeper knows the comings and goings of all the characters moving through town. Clues might be hidden in the horse stalls or by what some cowboys have around their saddle bags.

Newspaper Office – Inside the News office, guests will learn about the printing press process. The newspaper will have an important part in the overarching spy stories. Clues will be hidden in articles and advertisements. Guests will also get information by asking the print master to “buy advertisements.”

Restaurant (F&B) – Located on main street, the restaurant is merely a continuation of the themed experience. The walls will feature world building elements, however this area will not contribute in any major way to the overarching narratives.

General Store – The general store will also operate in a space outside of the overall narrative of the park. It will exist inside the world and sell penny candy, toys, merchandise, and other goods commonly found in living history museums.

Western Union (telegraph office) – Guests will communicate to the Post Master to send and receive messages. This office will have an interactive element, where guests will have to send and decipher Morse Code from ticker tape. The telegraphs will be animated and respond to correct messages sent. The machines will be stationed around the room, with machines in banks corresponding to different locations.

Zebulon Theater – A place for guests to sit in the dark and get out of the heat, that being said clues will be hidden inside and around the theater. Theaters have been a popular place in spy movies for characters to get a “drop” so guests should watch out where they sit.

City Hall – A general place for guests to find out more information or get back on track. This building at the end of main street will feature the towns history and other maps to better inform the guests of the area.

Sheriff's Office – Inside the sheriff's office, guests will be able to explore the jail cells and sheriff's bulletin boards for clues. Wanted posters will hang on the walls, and the evidence room will have items on display for guests to investigate.

Hotel – An opportunity for a more traditional escape room experience, along their journey guests might need to investigate the hotel room of the missing agent. But make sure you stop by the front desk, you never know if someone has something waiting for them upon their arrival. But be careful, you never know who might be waiting in a hotel lobby.

Nikola Tesla's Workshop – Tesla's workshop is a recent addition to town. He recently moved into the area to do some high-altitude experiments, however his arrival as sent shockwaves through the West. After some of his technology disappeared, Tesla decided to open up his workshop to the Rough Riders and lend them help. Tesla's workshop is open to all guests, however the guests arriving might have arterial motives. For the guests sided with the Rough Riders, they are there to examine for clues, while the "Hole-in-the-Wall" guests are trying to run interference.

Boot Hill Cemetery – Hidden amongst the tombstones are subtle clues towards the towns past residence. This small area on the edge of town and the woods, holds the secrets to the town's history. Guests would be encouraged to wander amongst the tombstones and make rubbings of names or symbols that might jump out to them.

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