



millfieldcounty.com

Hayden Porter

TOOLKIT

VSCode



Codex



ChatGPT



Obsidian



ElevenLabs



What is millfieldcounty.com?

- millfieldcounty.com is an online alternate reality game (ARG).
- It surrounds a fictional county, but why does it feel so real?
- Read articles, listen to voicemails, and solve the puzzle.



IDEATION

How can I get people interested in the narrative of my indie game Palimpsest?

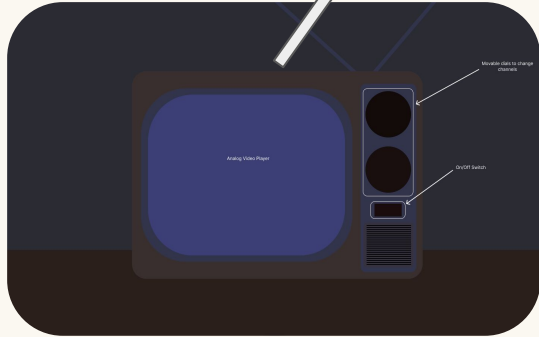


Sequence:

- A slice of Palimpsest: the TV point and click scene? (Didn't translate well to a website)
 - Palimpsest lore website? No.
- An ARG set in the same town as Palimpsest?

BINGO

IDEATION: Visuals/Flowchart



Research: Ambiguity in Design

Explored research on ambiguous UX and interpretive systems

Ambiguity can increase engagement by encouraging users to construct meaning themselves

Key Insight:

Users are more engaged when meaning is discovered, not explained

“Ambiguous design should be evocative, not didactic.”

Design Application

Avoided direct instructions

Spread narrative across different types of media (records, email, audio, imagery)

Used ambiguity to encourage exploration

“Ambiguous design should be evocative, not didactic.”

Design Decisions



District Liaison

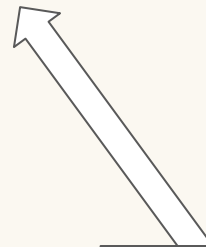
Department/Area: Schools and District Coordination

Email: emercer@millfieldcounty.gov

Office Phone: (555) 014-2135



**AI Generated
Realistic Imagery**



**Fake Bureaucratic
Details**



**Early-2000s
government style**

Elaine Mercer serves as county liaison for local schools and district offices, supporting schedule coordination, event communication, and parent-facing updates.

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Target User

- **Audience:** Fans of ARGs, analog horror, and narrative mysteries (18–30 years old)
- **Traits:** Curious, detail oriented, enjoys uncovering hidden meaning on their own
- **Behavior:** Willing to explore deeply, read closely, and piece together a fragmented story
- **Needs:** Immersive experiences that feel real without hand holding
- **Design Impact:** Designed to reward exploration over instruction, using subtle interactions and ambiguity to drive user engagement



Competitive Analysis

Field: Narrative Horror Experiences /
Interactive Mysteries

Project 1: Welcome Home ARG

Project 2: Blue Prince



Competitor 1: Welcome Home ARG

Welcome Home is an experimental multimedia horror project. It is a sprawling website that explores a lost 1970s children's show.

The official site tells users that "half the story is finding and experiencing things for yourself."

Design: The site contrasts its unsettling story with bright colors, and toy like characters. It also spreads it's story across different types of media like audio files, videos, images, etc.

The site leans heavily into ambiguity so much so that if one were to stumble on the site, they might not realize it is a narrative driven horror.

Since it is so ambiguous it can feel difficult to understand the story. This combined with the sprawling design, makes the site feel difficult to be immersed in.



Competitor 2: Blue Prince

Blue Prince is a commercial puzzle/mystery game about exploring your late grandfather's manor. The manor's layout is ever changing and the end goal is to reach the 46th Room.

Here is a semiotic analysis I wrote about the game if you are interested: [LINK](#)



Competitor 2: Blue Prince

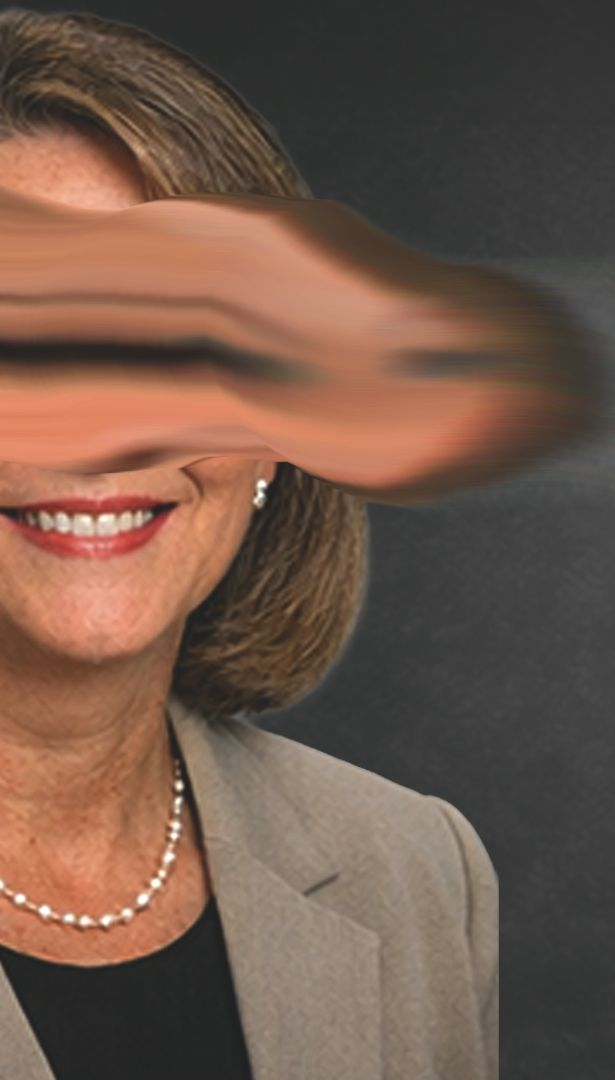
Design: The design of Blue Prince is very system driven. It is extremely difficult to explain so I am linking a short video to help showcase: [LINK](#)

Narrative: The narrative of Blue Prince is hidden throughout its environment. It is shown through portraits on walls, letters in safes, and even secret passageways.

Response/Audience: Blue Prince was a massive success, it was up for game of the year, and it currently shows a Very Positive on Steam with 15,383 reviews.

Failures: Since it is a roguelike some players complain its randomness slows progress and makes the experience too dependent on luck.





Comparison

millfieldcounty.com overlaps with both projects.

My site leans more into horror than either examples. It uses multimedia to showcase a fragmented narrative.

It is darker, more psychological, and more unsettling.

It will take what works from both projects and iterate on them.

From Welcome Home, taking the idea of web native discovery and artifact based storytelling. From Blue Prince, taking the idea that mystery should deepen through interaction.

Video Walkthrough



LINK

millfieldcounty.com