Hometown, GAMMA TERRA

By Craig A. Campbell

Welcome to Gamma Terra, home of every possible thing you can imagine, all mashed up together in a shattered, post-apocalyptic worldscape. The *D&D Gamma World* box set includes a description of what Gamma Terra is like, and its upcoming supplements include adventure details on places as far-reaching as Far-Go to the moon.

When creating adventures, some GMs like to incorporate their own hometowns (or other real-world locations) into Gamma Terra. After all, what better place to play than your own backyard! This guide is for those GMs.

The first part of this article deals with translating a specific location into a Gamma Terra version of itself. It is structured in a specific format meant to help facilitate the translation process, and it features random tables for your use.

The second part presents the town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin, (mentioned in the *Gamma World* introduction, no less) translated using these guidelines. Why Peshtigo? Because that's my hometown.

Location Translation Guide

So, you're ready to get started on the grand adventure of translating your favorite location into a *Gamma World* setting. Where do you start? What do you do after that? Just follow the steps below to create your translated location. Just keep in mind one thing as you do so: Have fun with it, and build it so that others can have fun with it, too.

Define your Plan

Figure out how you want to "attack" your translation process. Although you can generate everything from your research and imagination, such a plan ignores one of the defining characteristics of *Gamma World:* that of chaos. And by chaos, I mean random tables.

This guide focuses on the "Three L's."

"Location" is the specific location you've chosen, including its history, real-world significance, and map layout.

"Locals" are the local personages that populate your location.

"Landmarks" are specific buildings, parks, public amenities, and so forth that are unique to your location.

Developing a few things from your own imagination and research first can be helpful, and then you can use them as you develop them. After that, fill out the rest of your *Gamma World* translation by rolling on the tables provided in each section below. Rolling some things randomly can present you with unique combinations that you might not otherwise come up with on your own.

Keep in mind that the material in this article is only a framework. Expand upon everything you develop (or roll on the tables below) and tie them all together to create a complete and unique *Gamma World* variation of your chosen location.

Choose a Real-World Location

As you begin your journey to translate a real-world location into *Gamma World*, the first thing you need to do is choose a location to translate. This location might be the town in which you grew up or the one in which you currently reside. Alternatively, it might be a real-world location that you'd like to research and incorporate into your game as a setting.

You can choose whatever type of location you want, from a small town to a metropolitan city, or even a national park, countryside location, or just a small part of a larger city.

History

First, start by researching the history of your chosen location. As might be expected, the Internet is a great resource for such an endeavor. Even if some of the information you find online is inaccurate, you can take what you find and work from there. *Gamma*

World combines the histories of many alternate universes, so inaccurate Internet information isn't a big deal. If you have access to local libraries, you can also look up things in old newspapers and books written about the area.

The most important thing in this step is to get a good sense of the history of the location, even if you don't develop a comprehensive timeline. Then, take several of the more interesting historical events from the location and set them aside for later use.

Maps

You can find maps online. Google Maps, town/city websites, and history websites can provide you with a current map of your location. Campus maps are also commonly available online, as are maps to shopping malls, amusement parks, airports, and other places you might wish to set encounters. Additionally, *d20 Modern*'s *Critical Locations* featured a wealth of maps of modern locations for use.

If you can visit the location or already live there, you might talk to local planning officials or historians to find out if you can make copies of current or historic maps.

Explore Myriad Universes

Gamma Terra is composed of a mish-mash of locales, events, societies, and technologies garnered from the real world and sundry alternate universes. Everything in Gamma Terra is built from the often-chaotic combination of these components in the wake of the Big Mistake.

Assuming you have a handle on your location's real-world history, take some time to explore possible alternate histories as well as possible fantastic universes. Your location should be an amalgamation

of the real-world location and various alternate universes (which we'll cover in part below).

Real World History

Pinpoint a few historical events that are significant to your real-world location. Use these as a basis for your *Gamma World* location translation so that players have a "real world" basis upon which to understand your location.

Alternate Histories

In some of the universes that collided during the Big Mistake, your location might have developed differently than it did in real life. Although your Gamma Terra location is strongly rooted in a modern, technologically advanced real world, such "alternate histories" might impact your location in subtle, yet significant, ways.

For example, in an alternate history, a war that affected your location might have instead been won by the losing faction, resulting in a populace that embraces the alternate victors. Technology might have progressed faster or more slowly in one or more of these alternate histories, resulting in people that are used to such differences. Your location might have stagnated in an obsolete social paradigm; for example, your populace might be fine with a feudal or tribal society.

Take some time to explore such alternate histories and figure out how they impact your location. A location where the populace embraces the specifics of such an alternate history can provide the players with a very different "adventuring world" where their personal expectations are not the norm.

Fantastic Influences

Many of the alternate universes that make up Gamma Terra are those that developed in fantastic ways, beyond the boundaries of what is considered "normal" for the world we know. In these "fantastic universes," strange and alien influences made their mark on the world we know. These include Area 52, Ishtar, and Xi, and they are described on page 68 of the *Gamma World* Rulebook.

Use this table only if you wish to have fantastic universes impact your location in very specific ways. If you want your location to be an amalgamation of all technology sources, skip this part.

FANTASTIC UNIVERSES TABLE

d6	Fantastic Universe Influence
1	One building in the location is a repository for Area 52 technology.
2	Extraterrestrials with Area 52 technology abandoned the location ages ago and took their tech with them. The location is bereft of Area 52 tech.
3	The location was an Ishtaran "capital city." Ishtaran technology is very common in the area.
4	The location was once a bastion of defense against the advancing Empire of Ishtar. Ishtaran technology is very rare and its use is punishable by death.
5	To this day, the Xi influence the location from their hidden, underground bunkers. Xi technology is very common.
6	The location is bereft of Xi influence. Xi tech cannot be found in this location.

Customized Omega Tech Decks

GMs who develop a location that has a strong fantastic universe influence should create customized Omega Tech decks to reflect this, including only cards from the selected technology source. If you do so, have the

players draw from your customized Omega Tech deck whenever they find an Omega Tech cache.

Determine the Location's Theme(s)

Many locations in *Gamma World* are focused in terms of theme. Some are trading outposts or frontier towns, and others are centers of learning or seats of great power. Determine your location's theme(s). Choose multiple themes if your location is large enough to support such complexity.

LOCATION THEME TABLE

d10	Theme
1	Trade outpost/travel crossroads
2	Farming town
3	Center of learning
4	Seat of government (such as it is)
5	Mining town
6	Frontier town
7	Home of great technology (or remnants)
8	Gladiatorial town
9	Vagabond/transient settlement
10	Center of industry (such as it is)

Embrace the Apocalypse

In many of the universes that collided, a global nuclear apocalypse affected every populated location to some extent, though some fared better than others. Determine how badly your location was affected by such a nuclear apocalypse.

If you roll on the table below, adjust the roll based on the overall size and political/military importance the location held prior to the war as follows.

Countryside: –6
Village: –5
Town: –3
Small city: –1
Medium-sized city: +2
Large city: +4
Political/military hub: an additional +2

APOCALYPSE INFLUENCE TABLE

d10	Apocalypse Influence
1	No significant damage. Most of the location is in disrepair.
2	Several buildings are destroyed. The rest are in disrepair.
3	Many buildings are destroyed. The rest are in disrepair.
4	One nuclear strike hit the location. The rest of the area suffered shockwaves and is in severe disrepair. The population was hit hard and many fled.
5	Two nuclear strikes hit the location. The rest of the area suffered shockwaves and is in severe disrepair. The population was hit hard and many fled.
6	One important building or area in the location took a targeted nuclear strike and is in ruins. The rest of the location is in severe disrepair. The population was hit hard and many fled.
7	Three important buildings or areas in the location took targeted nuclear strikes and are in ruins. The rest of the location is in severe disrepair. The population was hit very hard and many fled.
8	Half of the location took nuclear strikes and are in ruins. The rest of the location is in severe disrepair. The population was hit very hard and many fled.
9	Three-quarters of the locations took nuclear strikes and are in ruins. The rest of the location is in severe disrepair. The population was hit very hard and almost everyone else fled.
10	Nearly the entire location is in ruins. Population is almost decimated.

Populate your Location

A *Gamma World* location is just a bunch of buildings, roads, and terrain if it's not populated. To breathe life into your location, you need to populate it with interesting and unique locals.

These locals should relate, in some way, to the theme(s) you've developed for your location. Give some thought to who these locals are and develop a handful for use in your game. You can always add more locals later.

PROMINENT LOCALS TABLE

d10	Prominent Locals
1	A local bully threatens the populace.
2	A wizened sage provides information about the location to the players.
3	A young street urchin provides information about the location at a price.
4	A kindly woman provides housing and meals to all in need.
5	A friendly drunk guides newcomers around the location, though his information might not be entirely reliable.
6	A dictatorial leader lords over the location, leading through intimidation.
7	A ghost wanders the location, occasionally helping the characters.
8	A crazed scientist toils endlessly in his laboratory.
9	A secretive vagabond lurks in the shadows, pursuing his own mysterious goals.
10	A gruff mechanic/engineer studies and repairs tech in his workshop.

Give Your Locals Some Flavor

Most of your locals are probably nonmutants. However, some might be mutants. If you want to give some of your locals a little mutant flavor, choose a mutant origin for them by rolling once on the Character Origin Table on page 34 of the *Gamma World* Rulebook.

If you give a local a mutant origin, you should also give him or her some traits and/or powers that reflect that origin.

Cryptic Alliances

The cryptic alliances described on page 91 of the *Gamma World* Rulebook might have an interest in your location. Determine which alliances are present and link them into both the theme of the location and the prominent locals you've developed.

CRYPTIC ALLIANCES TABLE

d6	Cryptic Alliances
1	A cadre of Archivists have discovered a powerful technological relic and worship it, seeking to bring others into their fold.
2	The location is home to a well-organized group of Bonapartists who govern the location, allowing only those of animal heritage to hold positions of power.
3	The Brotherhood of Thought has secretly established a sanctuary in the location and attempts to control the area.
4	A lone Knight of Genetic Purity has infiltrated the location and is gathering nonmutants in an effort to purge the local mutant threat.
5	A pair of twin Radioactivists has settled in the location and seek to irradiate the area to further their belief in the "Radiant Divine Glory."
6	A group of Restorationists actively seek to destroy Omega tech and restore the location to yesteryear's glory.

Determine Locals' Goals

Members of the various cryptic alliances have very specific agendas, but other locals in your location should have their own motivations and goals. Spend some time developing exactly what your prominent locals are up to.

LOCALS' GOAL TABLE

d10	Goal
1	The local wishes to create a utopia where all live together in harmony.
2	The local seeks to upset the local balance of power for the sheer enjoyment of it.
3	The local wishes to live in solitude and rebuffs attempts at friendship.
4	The local wishes to join a cryptic alliance and will do anything to be accepted.
5	The local seeks information on the whereabouts of family members who have gone missing.
6	The local strives to become the leader of the area.
7	The local is new to the location and seeks to establish a profitable business.
8	The local strives to prove his physical worth and isn't averse to fighting to prove it.
9	The local seeks to make amends with another local for past atrocities.
10	The local seeks to join the characters in their endeavors.

Develop Important Landmarks

You should now define some important landmarks in your location. Regardless of what purpose(s) these landmarks served in the real world, you need to give them a *Gamma World* "twist" that transforms them into locales unique to Gamma Terra (just think of the locations used in the old *Thundarr the Barbarian* cartoon). Whatever twist you give to a landmark, you should determine the specifics of exactly *why* the landmark is the way it is.

LANDMARK TWIST TABLE

d10	Twist
1	The landmark is the seat of local government, filled with locals who constantly vie for power.
2	The landmark is radioactive. Characters traveling into the landmark take 5 radiation damage at the beginning of each of their turns while in the landmark.
3	The landmark is in pristine condition.
4	The landmark is in ruins, having been decimated by a nuclear blast or some other catastrophe.
5	The local populace worships the landmark.
6	The landmark is a lost stronghold of a fantastic universe. Choose a fantastic universe (Area 52, Ishtar, or Xi) that previously used the landmark as a base of operations.
7	The landmark is populated by a multitude of survivors who have transformed it into a "mini-location" unto itself. Develop a leader for this mini-location and define his or her goals.
8	The landmark is abandoned and bereft of sentient life. Locals avoid the landmark entirely.
9	The landmark is home to one or more members of a cryptic alliance. Determine which cryptic alliance has taken up residence.
10	The landmark is five times larger than in the real world.

Build Your Map

Now that you've defined your location, locals, and landmarks, you need to develop a map. Use the maps you've accumulated and your design decisions to sketch out a map of your location. This map should include everything you've developed for your area. You'll use it in the future as the "master map" for your location. As your campaign progresses, you can add to it.

Once you've drawn your master map, you might want to draw up a player handout map that defines some of the basics of your location. This player map should include only the information you want to present to the players when their characters arrive at your location and might include faulty information. Your players can fill in additional information as they send their characters in to explore.

Name Your Location

Locations in Gamma Terra are frequently named based on a slight variation of the real-world name that references the specifics of the Gamma Terra version of the location.

Take some time to examine everything you've done with your Gamma Terra location and find a suitable name—one that evokes the overall feel of *Gamma World*. Your location's name should hearken to the real world, but also embrace the nature of the Gamma Terra location you've developed.

PESHTIGO IN GAMMA TERRA

The following is a translation of my hometown of Peshtigo, Wisconsin, into a Gamma Terra location. Let's first take a look at my "plan of attack" for translating Peshtigo into *Gamma World*.

Selecting Some Specifics

Being quite familiar with Peshtigo from having grown up there, I decided to use the following specific, real-world information to translate the town.

Map: I'll use the current map of Peshtigo from Google Maps.

History: I'll focus on the Great Peshtigo Fire, which engulfed the town and outlying areas in early October of 1871 in what is, to this day, the deadliest fire in U.S. history. How it started is open to some debate, providing a bit of mystery.

Alternate Histories: I'll give the great fire a fantastic source in an alternate timeline.

Locals' Flavor: Peshtigo is home to Badger Park and Badger Paper Mill. *Gamma World* includes mutated badgers called badders; I'll definitely give these guys a prominent role.

Landmarks: Badger Park, Badger Paper Mill, the Peshtigo River, Dairy Queen, Harper Funeral Home, Peshtigo High School, and the big house on Pine Street.

Rolling Randomly

Having determined the things I want to incorporate, I'll leave the rest to chance (with a few exceptions of my choice). Here's what I rolled on the tables along with a few choices I made for internal consistency.

Fantastic Universes
4—Ishtaran tech is outlawed.
Theme
5—Mining town.
Apocalypse Influence
3—Mildly affected.
Prominent Locals
4—Kindly woman.

5—Friendly drunk.
10—Gruff mechanic.
My choice: Given the "badger" theme in town, I'll develop a "big badder" and give him a leadership role.
Cryptic Alliances
2—Bonapartists.
Locals' Goals
Kindly Woman: 1—Seeker of utopia.
Friendly Drunk: 6—Strives for leadership.
Gruff Mechanic: 7—New businessman.
Landmark Twists
Badger Park: 7—Populated by many survivors.
Badger Paper Mill: 3—Pristine condition.
Peshtigo River: My choice—I'll link it to the fire.
Dairy Queen: 4—In ruins.
Harper Funeral Home: My choice—I'll fill it with monsters.
Peshtigo High School: My choice—I'll make it home to gladiatorial games.
House on Pine St.: 3—Pristine condition.

Now I'll take all of these tidbits and mesh them to define my Gamma Terra location.

PESH-Dig-Hole

The small town of PESH-Dig-Hole sits near the northwest shore of what locals call Lake Again. Rumor has it that everything that has ever happened in all possible universes has happened at some point on the shores of Lake Again.

The shoreline south and east of town is overcome with a miasma of possible worldliness, each melding into the next. Characters exploring the shoreline can explore the influences of sundry, varied universes. Occasionally, a denizen of an alternate universe crosses over and wanders into town.

Town History

According to local legend . . .

In ages past, this simple town was a farming village and home to a paper mill, a factory where people worked together in harmony to produce paper, a once-important fuel for campfires.

Decades ago, the town was visited by a fiery meteor from the heavens. The flaming rock struck the heart of the town and ignited a great fire that was dubbed the Greatest Campfire Ever.

The Campfire burned for many days, laying waste to the town and the once verdant forests surrounding it, crippling its papermaking industry. In time, the Great Campfire even consumed the river that ran through town. But, as the fire died away in the outlying regions, it kept burning in the riverbed in town. It burns even to this day.

The Town Today

The town has been repopulated by those who are drawn to the secret of the fiery riverbed, a diverse community having sprung up around this mystical fire. A small army of badders led by Joshiah Bigbadder controls the town.

Today, PESH-Dig-Hole is a small mining town where miners, business entrepreneurs, and thrill-seekers congregate, each hoping to take advantage of the expected future discovery of the source of the flames in the everburning riverbed. In many ways, it's like an Old West mining camp just before the "big strike" is made.

Roughly 500 people call PESH-Dig-Hole home, though this number will increase dramatically when the source of the fire is discovered. Locals refer to the as-yet-undiscovered ore that is the source of the everburning fire as PESH (Perpetual, Everlasting Source of Heat.) Even in the depths of winter, the flaming riverbed provides the town with warmth. The town never experiences true winter.

Despite PESH-Dig-Hole being a relatively rural community, in some alternative world lines it was a bastion of defense against the Empire of Ishtar. Because of this, Ishtaran tech can be found in a few hidden locations. However, Ishtaran tech is forbidden by the badders controlling the town and its use is punishable by death.

Local Landmarks

Fleshing out the landmarks as you see below can help provide the game with built-in adventure hooks.

The Big-Burn

The riverbed that runs through the town is constantly engulfed in flames, fueled by an undiscovered ore source deep within it. Creatures in the riverbed take 5d10 fire damage at the start of their turns.

Occasionally, a loud explosion heralds the riverbed firing off a bit of flaming debris that flies out into the town and sets something on fire. When this happens, the townsfolk rush to extinguish the blaze, hoping to avoid another Great Campfire.

The Badder Mills

Two separate locations sit on either side of the Big-Burn.

North Badder Mill is an old pulp mill where wood was chipped into pulp and sent underground (through the Badder Tunnel) to South Badder Mill.

South Badder Mill was the finishing area of the old paper mill, where wood pulp was made into paper.

Both Badder Mills are scattered with Omega Tech and are also home to the badders that control the town.

Badder Tunnel

A long underground tunnel connects the two mills. It was once a sluice-way for wood pulp being sent from the pulp mill to the paper mill. Now it is home to mining operations conducted by the local badder population. The badders are searching for the source of the perpetual fire.

The Glowy Bridge

A single bridge on Frenchie Street connects the two sides of town. The bridge has been covered over and sheathed in metal, creating something more akin to a tunnel than a bridge. The metal constantly glows red. Badders control the bridge and demand payment from anyone who wishes to cross.

Badder Park

This large park lies on the northern end of town, west of the Big-Burn. A mysterious woman named Lanalana oversees the settlers in the park. The people who live here have constructed shanties from debris collected from all over town.

Scary Queen

The only local "chain restaurant" was destroyed in a blast decades ago; only the sign remains, now having been changed to read "Scary Queen." It sits atop an underground complex established by Ishtar in a lost universe. This large bunker is filled with Ishtaran tech, but only one local knows this (Obie One-Eye).

Harder Fun Home

This large building (once a funeral home and attached residence) is filled with strange creatures. Adventurous locals sometimes venture into the house and grounds to hunt these monsters for sport.

The Fight-Nasium

In the gymnasium of what was once the local high school, gladiatorial games are held to entertain the populace. Most of these games are friendly, with participants being allowed to yield to avoid suffering serious injury or death.

Occasionally, the badders sentence a law-breaker to fight to the death in the Fight-Nasium.

Kine House

This three-story house stands just east of the bridge. It is home to a kindly woman named Mother Kine who welcomes all in need. The house has been fortified over the years and is very secure.

Prominent Locals

Using the results of the rolls (and my own choices), I fleshed out the local characters.

Josiah Bigbadder

This intimidating badder leads the badders who control the town. He is a Bonapartist colonel and only admits those of animal heritage (mostly badders) into his army. He controls the town through fear and intimidation and conducts mining investigations in Badder Tunnel to discover the ore that powers the Big-Burn.

Josiah occasionally holds council in North Badder Mill, in a large silo once reserved for chemical dump-off.

Fisherman Eddie

Although Fisherman Eddie appears to be the town drunk, this persona is a clever ruse. Eddie is a wily fellow looking to overthrow Josiah Bigbadder, and he is quietly gathering townsfolk to aid him. He wishes to lead the town and would probably be a good leader, if he can only overthrow the badders.

He cruises around town on a kit-bashed, three-wheeled motorcycle/pedalcycle.

Mother Kine

Mother Kine is an elderly cow-mutant who inhabits Kine House and offers aid to all in need. She seeks friendship with all who call PESH-Dig-Hole home and wishes to usher the townsfolk into a utopian age bereft of the technology of the past.

Obie One-Eye

Obie is a gruff, towering, eye-patch-sporting mechanic who arrived in town a few months ago. He has discovered the Ishtaran complex under the Scary Queen and has scavenged many items from the site. Characters can barter for his wares, which count as "salvaged gear," per the Omega Tech salvage rules. He is slowly building a very profitable trade business based around this.

Lanalana the Leader

Lanalana takes care of the settlers in Badder Park. She doesn't want to be a leader, but fills the role out of necessity, since no one else has stepped up. Should someone else come forward, she'll acquiesce to this leader and take up residency in solitude on the north end of town.

Ancient Junk in PESH-Dig-Hole

Every time the characters scavenge for gear in PESH-Dig-Hole, they might find ancient junk that is specific to the town. Whenever the characters scavenge for gear, roll on the following table to determine a bit of location-specific junk that they find in addition to the gear they find by rolling on the nonspecific Ancient Junk table.

PESH-DIG-HOLE ANCIENT JUNK

d10	Item
1	A hardbound copy of the *Peshcocan*, the local high school's yearbook, dated 1990.
2	A triangular, wooden sign depicting a large flame in the middle of it.
3	A white football helmet emblazoned with a dog's pawprint in blue on one side.
4	A trombone.
5	A large, blue banner featuring the image of a bulldog and the words "Peshtigo High School."
6	A small patch depicting a clenched fist (the symbol of Ishtar).
7	A cable TV box emblazoned with the words "Time Warner."
8	An old, yellowed copy of *The Peshtigo Times*, featuring an article about Badger Paper Mill.
9	An arm-length wooden stick emblazoned with the word "Spirit."
10	A brass badge reading "Chief of Police" and "Peshtigo."

About the Author
Craig Campbell grew up in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. He attended college in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and moved to Marietta, Georgia, about four years ago. Despite his travels, he considers Peshtigo his hometown. He knows why the French nuked his hometown in 3% of all possible *Gamma World* universes, but isn't telling.