Lawless Vandalism Breaks Into Historic Richardson Family Tomb in Pelham

RICHARDSON TOMB IN BUTLER CEMETERY, PELHAM

Recalling the legendary excavations in Egyptian mythology and the more recent expeditions by the late Lord Carnarvon at the tomb of King Tutankhamen, the constabulary of Pelham, N. H., yesterday discovered one of the most startling examples of vandalism ever committed in the history of the town, when they found that a century-old vault in the ancient Butler Cemetery on Main Street road and containing the remains of Gen. S. M. Richardson and his descendants, had been forcibly broken open during the past two weeks, and the interior disturbed in a great extent, while it is not known that anything was taken from the iron and rock-bound repository, the fact remains that the sarcophagus of the tomb was interfered with maliciously, unsanely ripped open and ashes scattered about the place promiscuously.

Health Officer James O. Tsoumbakos of Pelham reported the matter to the state health department at Concord, N. H., as soon as the break was brought to his attention. This morning he stated that the town authorities are at a loss to account for the disturbance of the vault, one of the oldest and most historic in the country, while Constable John O. Jameson is inclined to believe that the work was that of irresponsible looters. There are no traces of tools to work on, they say but should the culprit be apprehended, they will be dealt with severely. The vandalism for such an offense is usually a jail sentence in the state of New Hampshire.

There have been no burials in the Butler cemetery for more than 13 years, though people came today. The descendants of the Richardson family are long since dead and gone and even the memory of their residential life in Pelham has passed into history. Gen. S. M. Richardson, so far as could be learned from the inscription on the obelisk surrounding the vault, was the son of Daniel Richardson, who died in May 1840 at the age of 44 years, and Sarah B. Richardson, who died on Aug. 24, 1841, to the ripe old age of 77. The title of "General" was conferred on the son because of his endeavors to organize a military unit in the town before the outbreak of the Civil War. He died on March 12, 1863, aged 72 years. His first wife, Abigail, died at the age of 62 years on June 24, 1854, while a second wife, Hannah, passed away on June 9, 1857. All are buried in separate compartments in the vault.

Small stone steps lead to the interior in each of the five compartments, enclosed by heavy iron doors and bolts. The locks were broken by the marauders, and the doors ripped from their hinges. The wooden caskets of oblong shape, were torn open. In one of the vaults the remains of a baby whose name does not appear on the obelisk, this casket was left untouched.

Constable Jameson was informed by the state authorties that insurance, which he characterized as "disagreeable," will be reported by the state as soon as possible.

Timothy Donovan, well known in this city and one of Pelham's best known residents, died last evening at St. Joseph's hospital, Nashua, N. H., aged 88 years. He had been a resident of Pelham for over 40 years and a veteran of the Civil War was a member of Post 116, A. F. & A. M., of this city. For many years he held the position of color-bearer of the past and was a familiar figure whenever the post appeared on parade. He is survived by ten sons, Edward J. of Farmington, N. H. The body will be brought to the home of his son, Edward J. Donovan, 21 Westford street, by Undertakers James F. O'Donnell & Sons.

Pelham Historical Society, Pelham, New Hampshire
William T. Hayes & Karen Genoter