

A Dubious Story

This is a story appropriate for those who get into the grave factors of Halloween.

On April 4, 1900 the Rochester Courier reported the following story under the headline "Fought For His Life Within His Coffin." It follows:

"The hamlet of Sandy Creek in Orleans County, fourteen miles northeast of Albion, is excited over a discovery made yesterday, which revealed the fact that one of its citizens had been buried alive.

"On January 4th Vett Case died from scarlet fever. The remains were interred in the Sandy Creek Cemetery. Case was 35 years old, and was unconscious for several hours before he was pronounced dead by the attending physician.

"On Friday of last week Case's father was taken violently ill, and on Sunday he died. When arrangements were made on Monday for burial in the family plot it was discovered that there was no room for the elder Case without a re-arrangement of the bodies already interred. It was, therefore, decided to remove the casket containing the body of Vett Case to a place several feet distant. This was done.

"Upon disinterring the casket the grave diggers were astonished to find that the glass front in the coffin was shattered, the bottom kicked out and the sides considerably sprung. The lid was removed and the body found resting upon its face, the arms bent at the sides and in the tightly clinched fingers were handful of hair.

"There is no doubt that Case was buried alive, but the date of his issuance from the trance, of course, is not known. Both bodies were interred this afternoon."

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Bethinking of Olde Orleans

The hamlet of Sandy Creek is now known as Murray.

Embalming was perfected during the Civil War but did not become customary until the early 20th century. Such a situation as this could possible occurred if the body had not been embalmed.

However, with a little more checking into this "Case" I discovered a brief article in an Albion paper totally refuting what the Courier had reported under the title "A Cruel Fake." It is as follows:

"A cruel story was sent out from Albion to Buffalo and Rochester papers last week, to the effect that the body of Sylvester Case, a Murray farmer who died in January last, had been disinterred in order to make room, by changing its location on the family burial lot, for the body of his father, who died a few days after a brief illness, and that the position and condition of the casket and body furnished positive proof that the man had been buried alive and had regained consciousness in the grave and made an awful struggle. The story was false in every particular. The body was buried in Kendall and has not been taken up while the body of the senior Case was buried in Sandy Creek. The effect of such a report on the family of the deceased can well be imagined, and the parties who originated and gave publicity to the story should hang their heads in shame."

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