

# The Tweed News

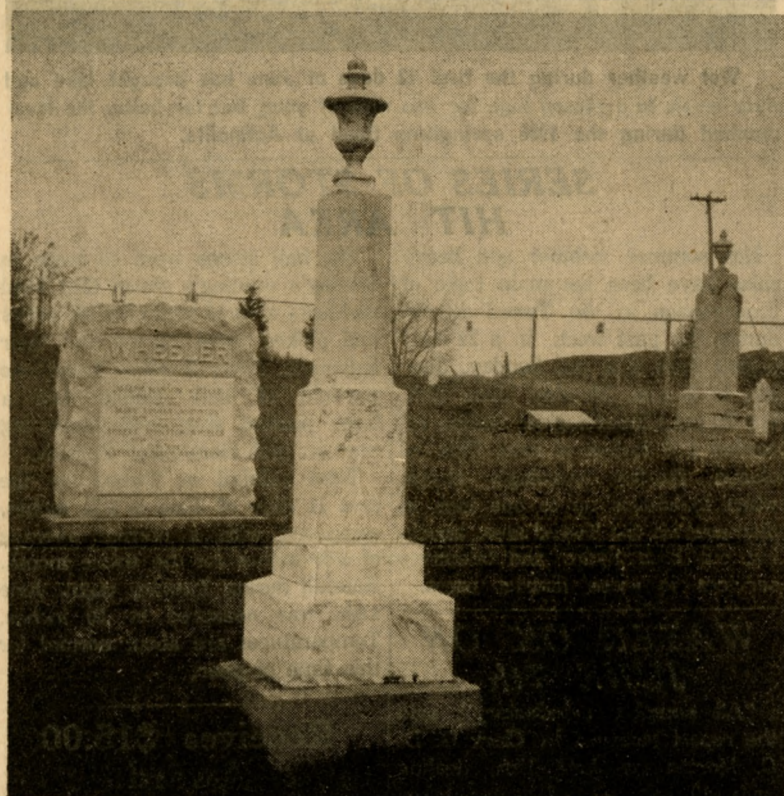
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THE GRAVE OF S. CONGER JOHNSTON, BETHEL CEMETERY

## BODY SNATCHING COMMON PRACTICE 80 YEARS AGO

From The Tweed News  
November 28th, 1889

The body of the late Stephen Conger Johnston, who was lately buried, has been carried off by some vandals, whom we pity if the friends of the deceased discover. We understand the authorities have taken the matter in hand and are doing their best to discover the perpetrators of this dastardly outrage. This body snatching is getting altogether too common in and around Tweed, and it is high time a stop was put to it.

January 30th, 1890

From The Tweed News  
(Copied from the Kingston Whig  
of January 24.)

A little over a month ago the body  
of S. C. Johnston, Tweed, was stolen

from the cemetery. Shortly after the remains were buried, a member of the family had occasion to visit the grave and discovered that the body had been carried away. Suspicion at once rested on the medical students. The son of the deceased, Thomas Johnston, came to Kingston and searched the medical college, but no trace of the body could be found. After returning to Tweed he received an intimation that the body was in the hands of the medical students and about to be dissected. He returned to Kingston and informed the police. Accompanied by the police, he went to the college and recognized the remains of his father lying on a dissecting table. The police claimed the body. A number of students were present at the time, but the only thing said was,

"Be sure you have the right one." The body had not been disfigured. It was very stiff, having been frozen. Where the students kept the body is a mystery, as it is over a month since it was stolen.

The students claim the body was not that of Stephen Johnston. When the body was taken to the station to be returned to Tweed, a number of students were present and endeavoured to persuade Mr. Johnston that the body was not that of his father, asking him to take another look. Mr. Johnston refused, saying he was going to take it anyway. The students think they can recover the body.

**Editor's Note :** Mr. S. C. Johnston died Sunday, November 17, and was buried on the 18th. His body was stolen from Bethel Cemetery on November 25. A few days after, his son, Thomas N. Johnston and Constable Beatty visited Kingston, but could not find the body. The sons then advertised in The Tweed News, offering a reward for the return of the body. This proved more successful, as shortly after the ad. appeared they received a letter from a lawyer in Belleville stating that if they would put up the amount of the reward, information would be furnished as to where the body of their father would be found, in perfect condition. They did so, with the result that the body has been found and has been fully identified by the family, notwithstanding the assertions of the students to the contrary.

From The Tweed News  
February 6th, 1890

An article, signed by two demonstrators of anatomy at Royal College, Kingston, has appeared in the Kingston Whig, saying that the body removed from the medical college was not that of Stephen Johnston and that in due time legal proceedings would be taken. Since this appeared a number of the friends and relatives of the Johnstons met at their home and prevailed upon them to have the body disinterred. All admitted that the corpse bore a very striking resemblance to Mr. Johnston, and while some were positive that it was none other than his body others contended that it was not. It was finally decided to leave it to Dr. Tuttle, who had attended Mr. Johnston in his last illness. He was sent for, and pointed out that while the body resembled very much that of Mr. Johnston, especially about the head and face, yet there were distinguishing marks that Mr. Johnston did not possess, especially a large abscess, or fever sore, on one leg, near the ankle, and that proved to him that the body was not that of the late Mr. Johnston.

We have not heard what action, if any, will be taken. It is quite evident that the party who perpetrated the disgraceful trick of palming off upon the family the remains of a man who looked like the late Mr. Johnston had been well acquainted with his facial appearance, and was no doubt struck by

the strong resemblance between the two, and did the thing either as a ghastly joke or else in hopes of getting the reward for the return of the body.

From The Tweed News  
March 20th, 1890

The case of a student at the Royal College, adjudged guilty of disclos-

ing information in regard to the recent grave robbing, was laid before the Faculty of the College. The student will probably be asked to leave.