

SHOCKING RELEVATIONS
THEY TOOK POLES AND HELD THE COFFIN DOWN
SR 1/25/1888

Rattle his Bones over the stones, He's Only a Pauper Whom Nobody Owns—Floating Coffins—Worse than Burying your Grandmother Under a Gooseberry Bush—Putting the Remains to Soak

That the management of the County Poor farm is rotten is a pretty general belief, and also that the investigators themselves need to be investigated. The following facts bear upon one phase of the management. When the farm was instituted, a spot was selected for a burying ground east of the poorhouse. This spot was found to be quicksand and wet. Nevertheless the management continued to bury paupers there until an article was written by Geo. W. Phelps and published condemning their treatment of paupers after death.

Then another and still worse spot was selected for a burial plot, where any excavation could not be made six feet deep without from a foot to two feet of water standing in it. In many cases the water had to be bailed out on lowering a coffin, and in one instance a coffin had to be held down with poles until sufficient dirt had been shoveled in to sink it. This continued until 15 or 20 paupers had been buried there. The last one was an old man who cut his throat about two years ago. He was buried without an inquest contrary to law. Justice Orton of Okemos, with a jury disinterred the body, notwithstanding the objections of Superintendent Jeffres. They found the coffin afloat in about a foot of water, to the surprise of the jurymen.

Indignant public comments upon this treatment of the paupers caused the selection of still another burial plot, number three. The next regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Ingham county appointed a committee upon the subject. The committee reported, October 16, 1886. Their report says: "The new ground is located in the southwest corner of the farm, where there is good and suitable soil for such purposes. We recommend that the new ground be fenced with a substantial board fence and the paupers who are buried

on the other parts of the farm be taken up and reburied in the new ground.” This report was signed by Supervisors M.J. Pollock, G.F. Fuller and Peter McIntyre, committee. And the report was accepted by the full Board of Supervisors.

This makes the following questions pertinent: Is it not a fact that the county house management have up to this date, entirely ignored and neglected to obey the plain recommendation, direction or order of the Committee and the Board of Supervisors? Is it not a fact that they are cultivating the ground over the graves of the paupers in burial plot number one? Is it not a fact that every one of the ten to fifteen paupers buried in plot number one still remain there, no doubt still soaking in the water, the same as the body of the poor suicide was found by the Justice?