

No Martyrs for a Hoax

On October 16, 1869 Hand Nichols and Gid Emmons were digging a well on Stub Newell's farm. At about five feet down they uncovered what looked like a human foot. It was, however, about twenty inches long and hard as a rock. Further excavation revealed a 3,000 lb. "petrified giant." Since the nearest town was the obscure village of Cardiff, New York, the discovery was known as the "Cardiff Giant."

News spread like wildfire. Newell put up a tent to shield the giant from public view and began charging admission. People came by the thousands to see this amazing discovery.

Highly esteemed professors from New York and Boston. Their opinions ran the gamut from "impossible" to "the greatest discovery of all time." Some thought it was a fossilized giant, and others pronounced it an ancient statue.

A graduate student from Yale examined it with a magnifying glass and announced that the scratches on the right arm were Phoenician characters that said: "Tamur, god of gods." Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that it was "very wonderful and undoubtedly ancient."

The controversy was good for business and as many as 3,000 per day came to see with their own eyes the Cardiff Giant. Two saloons sprang up and a cowshed was converted into a restaurant.

P. T. Barnum tried in vain to buy the big fellow for his circus. When his offers were refused sculptured a copy of the giant for his show and both drew big crowds.

In 1871, however, the Cardiff Giant was discovered to be a gigantic hoax. It was not an archeological discovery, it was a monument to man's gullibility.

It all began in 1866 when George Hull visited his sister in Iowa. While there he bought a five ton block of gypsum from a quarry about two miles east of Fort Dodge. He then hired horses to transport the stone to the nearest railroad which was forty miles away. The trip took twenty days. The stone was then transported by rail to Chicago.

In Chicago the stone was shaped into human likeness. The "pores" on the giant's "skin" were created with mallets and darning needles. It was sponged with water and said to give it a "worn" appearance. Finally it was bathed in sulphuric acid to make it look old.

In November 1868 the completed giant was shipped in secret to New York and discretely buried on a dark night. The field was sown with clover and the tricksters had less than a year to wait for the miraculous discovery to be made.

Even after the giant was proven to be a hoax, people paid a second time for the privilege of seeing what had fooled them the first time. P. T. Barnum is supposed to have said: "There is a sucker born every minute, and one dies every thirty minutes. That leaves me twenty-nine to work on in the mean time."

Today the "Cardiff Giant" is on display at the Farmer's Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y.

It is both interesting and significant that nobody died to perpetrate this hoax. When the scam was brought to light the perpetrators had a good laugh and confessed to their mischief.

The fact that the Apostles of Christ died preaching His resurrection immediately sets them apart from con men intent on perpetrating a hoax. The word "martyr," as you know, means "witness." Every Apostle was a witness of His resurrection, and not one of them changed their story no matter how severely they were persecuted.

The book of Acts reminds us that the Apostles of Christ preached Jesus and the resurrection (See Acts 1:22; 3:15; 4:2; 5:33; etc.) The small flame of Christianity could have been extinguished forever if the enemies of Christ could have produced His body and placed it on display. They could not! Neither could they illicit a single denial of His resurrection from those noble martyrs who sealed their testimony with their own blood.

There are no martyrs for a hoax, but there are plenty of martyrs for the resurrected Christ! Hallelujah! He is risen!