

# DISAPPEARING DIAMOND

By Alice Baker

*(Editor's note: It has been twenty years since the famous Eagle Diamond was stolen from the American Museum of Natural History. One of our early Landmark writers, Alice Baker, wrote its story in the Waukesha Freeman. Here's what Eagle native Baker wrote:)*



he Eagle Diamond again puts Eagle in the news. Notoriety by association is responsible for this exciting news item. Side by side the Star Sapphire of India and the DeLong Ruby, it assumed a value little suspected in that discovery year 1876. The true discoverers in that year were the well diggers employed by Tom Devereaux on his lot now owned by Henry Faestl at the summit of Diamond Hill.

Somewhere beyond the Pearly Gates it is easy to believe that Devereaux is regaling his former enemies with the humor he would feel over this local news item. His blue eyes would twinkle; a roguish smile would play upon his mobile lips; and his high pitched Irish tenor voice would say:

“Would you believe it? A little pebble no bigger than a pullet’s egg makin’ all this stir these eighty-eight years? Why, it was dug out of me well; forty feet down it lay in yellow clay.”

“The Woods, my renters, had been pesterin’ me for many the day about the old well bein’ dry. When I could stand their blatherin’ no longer, I called in the well diggers. After two or three days they comes up with the pretty pebble and gives it to the Woods niece who was livin’ with them. Then they took it to a jeweler who gave them a whole dollar for it.”

“That was when the action began. This jeweler, named Boyington, tested the stone and found it was a diamond. He formed a company and sold shares in it. He also sewed a couple of nest egg diamonds. To keep the public out of the mine, he draped a black cloth all around the lot.”

"T'was a sivin days wonder for a while. The prospectors found the nest egg diamonds, but no others. I tells folks I was the man who found the diamond. I sold my lot for twice what I paid for it. But barrin' your presence, those spalpeens should be roundly trimmed with a shillelagh."

Much additional fact could not amplify Devereaux's colloquy about this stone. Boyington sold it to Tiffany's in New York City for \$850. The Woods started suit for monies of which they had been cheated and rounds of litigation followed.

Years later an Eagle boy Vincent Clohisy, beginning law student, noted the stone at Tiffany's and wondered at its uncut condition. He found that fraud concerning it made possession doubtful; hence no owner would risk cutting. He also learned that the Eagle diamond was a classic study in determination of possession.

From Tiffany's, the stone was turned over to the American Museum of Natural History where, on October, 29th, it was stolen along with other gems valued at over \$400,000.

The Eagle Diamond now is valued at \$25,000, a far cry from its first purchase price.

Had the thieves succeeded in cutting the diamond, it would have been virtually impossible to trace, and might have been the one stone to bring riskless profits to those who seized it. □

