

[Rodee, Henry]

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.  
HENRY RODEE MAY BE DROWNED.

FRIENDS OF THE MISSING MAN CONVINCED THAT WHILE TEMPORARILY INSANE  
FROM EXCRUTIATING [sic] PAIN HE COMMITTED SUICIDE BY DROWNING  
HIMSELF IN THE OSWEGATCHIE RIVER. NO TRACE OF HIM YET.

Henry Rodee, one of Ogdensburg's oldest and most prominent residents disappeared from his home, presumably between three and four o'clock yesterday morning. No trace of his whereabouts has so far been secured and the generally accepted theory is that he committed suicide by drowning himself in the river. The motive advanced as prompting the tragic deed is the excruciating pain which he has at intervals suffered from chronic inflammation of the bladder. The fact that for many years he has been quite an extensive speculator in the grain market has given rise to many rumors intimating recent heavy losses, but such stories are discredited by men in a position to know something of his stock market transactions.

While the suicide explanation of the disappearance quickly asserted itself in the minds of the authorities and his friends, it was hoped that he might be found alive, but all efforts along those lines failed. It was learned at the Rodee home that he had been heard moving about the lower portion of the house during the early hours of the morning. About six o'clock it was found that he had not returned to his bed, but this was not unusual and did not excite much attention until it was discovered that he was not about the house. A search revealed the presence of his bunch of keys and a roll of bills which he had always carried in his pockets, both of which lay on a writing desk in the sitting room. His collar and necktie were in his room but his clothes, hat, overcoat and cane were gone. It was thought that while at the desk he might have written a note but none could be found. His wife had immediately communicated with some of his friends and the Chief of Police was notified. The night patrolmen were interviewed but none of them had seen him. At the depot diligent inquiry was made and the police returned satisfied that he had not gone away on any of the morning trains. As he had been in the habit of frequently going out to the cemetery, where a daughter whom he dearly loved, was buried a few years ago [in 1901], a search was made there but no trace of him found. He has property at Canton and relatives at Norwood but communication with these places proved those suggestions void.

This search and inquiry eliminated every clue advanced but that of suicide by drowning and the question is now whether he went from his house down the Crescent Park stairs to the Oswegatchie river, which is now abnormally deep and swift, or down State street to the St. Lawrence.

Men were out on the river in boats yesterday dragging at the mouth of the Oswegatchie. In connection with the disappearance a reward of one hundred dollars has been offered for the recovery of the body of Henry Rodee, dead or alive, supposed to have been drowned in the Oswegatchie river. There were no footprints or cane holes about the retaining wall of the river.

Mr. Rodee had frequently referred to the pain which he suffered and to Mrs. Rodee and others had intimated that it was more than he could stand. The day previous he was down town for a while and appeared to be in his usual spirits. He discussed the markets with some friends but said nothing that could be interpreted as giving the impression that he was despondent. He was a man who dealt freely but always took both losses and gains calmly, and seldom discussed his private business affairs. During the remainder of the afternoon nothing

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unusual was noticed about his demeanor or his conversation about the house, he having apparently passed a good day and consequently felt more cheerful.

Mr. Rodee has always been recognized as one of Ogdensburg's most representative citizens, mentally sound, financially solid and morally above reproach. He was born in Plattsburgh, September 29, 1820, where he received a good common school education and later entered a grist mill in that town and became thoroughly acquainted with every detail of the business. Upon the completion of his apprenticeship he established himself in business in Morley where he remained for three years. Mr. Rodee then purchased a mill in Potsdam and shortly afterwards opened and operated two mills in Plattsburgh. At the expiration of this period he removed to Ogdensburg and purchased the Front mill and subsequently the Parker mill, all now constituting the Bill, Bell & Co. property, from which firm he retired about four years ago.

This latter venture was destined to be his most successful one, the firm soon becoming one of the most important in the milling business in the State.

There has been much speculation in regard to Mr. Rodee's financial condition, but little definitely is known about it. He had the reputation, locally at least, of being a "plunger" in the market, a man of cool nerve, shrewd and full of confidence. He was never short of ready cash and carefully protected his investments. Though he has encountered many losses, and some of not far distant date, it is pretty authoritatively stated that in the vernacular, he was "ahead of the game" and those near to him say that his finances will be found all right. He had but little money invested in real estate, even considering it cheaper to rent his home than own it. He was quick to act, decisive and determined and unless temporarily insane those same qualities asserted themselves yesterday morning.

Mr. Rodee first married in 1856, Elvira McCantey of Potsdam, and they had two children—a son and a daughter. Later in life [in Jan. 1895] he married Ellen Merritt of Potsdam, a sister of General [Edwin A.] Merritt.

While at all times a staunch, active Republican he seldom aspired to office, although some years ago he served as supervisor and was for many years a commissioner of the water board, but in both politics and municipal matters his advice and counsel were eagerly sought. He was well and favorably known throughout Northern New York and was much respected and esteemed by all who knew him for his kindly, generous nature as well as for his unusual business qualifications. He was a member of the Universalist congregation. On January 1868 a society was formed in the city under the name of the "Church of the Messiah." The trustees were Henry Rodee, W. O. Alden and three others. They selected a lot on State street and had over \$6000 pledged as a building fund. The conditions were to engage either a Universalist or a Unitarian preacher. The house when not occupied was to be open to any denomination, or for scientific lectures. After a couple of years no action having been taken the society went down and the Universalist Chapel was later built.

A telegram was sent to Denver yesterday in an effort to reach his son, John V. Rodee of Norwood. At the Ogdensburg club much regret was expressed over the sad occurrence, Mr. Rodee having been a member whose company was thoroughly enjoyed.

Charges of dynamite will be exploded in the river today in the rear of the Hackett Hardware company's store in an effort to raise the body so generally supposed to be in the river.

*Ogdensburg News*, Ogdensburg NY, Fri. 20 Mar 1903

[Rodee, Henry]

BODY OF HENRY RODEE RECOVERED NEAR MASSENA, BURIAL HERE TODAY

Well Known Miller Disappeared Mysteriously From His Home in This City

Five Years Ago Last March. Identified by His Son, John, of Norwood

The remains of the late Henry Rodee have been found near Massena, completely identified, and will arrive at the New York Central depot this afternoon at 4:45 o'clock, from whence the funeral will be held. His many old friends are invited to be present.

When the body of an old gentleman was discovered near Massena, John V. Rodee of Norwood, son of deceased, was notified. He went there and after careful examination became convinced that it was the body of his father. The dark overcoat with velvet collar, grey suit, bow eye glasses in pocket, with case marked Bell Brothers of Ogdensburg, upper teeth heavily capped with gold and one foot partially cut off, all combined to assure the son that he was absolutely correct in his identification.

Mr. Rodee was a well-known miller in this city. He disappeared from his home on the Crescent early in the morning of March 19, 1903 and was never heard of since. It was generally believed that he had walked down to the river at Crescent Park and drowned himself, as he had been suffering intensely from illness and his injured foot.

Henry Rodee was born in Plattsburg in 1820. He operated mills at Plattsburg, Potsdam and Canton, later moving to Ogdensburg and purchasing the Front mill, subsequently the Parker mill, now the Bill, Bell property. He was well and favorably known throughout northern New York.

*Ogdensburg News*, Ogdensburg NY, Sun. 7 Jun 1908

Services were held at the Universalist church in this city yesterday in honor of the late Henry Rodee. Many of the highly-respected old gentleman's friends were present, among them being the staff of the Bill, Bell & Co. mill which closed down during the hours of service. An eloquent address of eulogy was delivered by Rev. Dr. Payson of Canton who credited the generosity and activity of Mr. Rodee with making possible the erection of the Universalist chapel here. Rev. A. [Adelbert] E. Allison assisted in the service. The remains were then buried in the Rodee plot in the Ogdensburg cemetery.

*Ogdensburg News*, Ogdensburg NY, Wed. 10 Jun 1908

Transcribed on 10 Feb 2010 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY