[Steves, Mary Elizabeth Bell]

Death of Old Resident Recalls Tragedy of Forty Years Ago

The death of Mrs. Mary E. Steves[1], which occurred at Chardon, Ohio, on April 27th, brings to the minds of the older residents of the village a tragedy of nearly forty years ago. At that time, December, 1890, Mrs. Steves, who was even then a widow, was living on the old homestead at Gypsum. She was confined to her bed with a broken leg when the news was brought to her that her only daughter, May, a beautiful and talented girl, a student at Butchel [Buchtel] College, Akron, Ohio [a Universalist institution], had been burned to death at a Christmas festivity gotten up by the college girls. The young ladies were dressed in costume with high hats covered with cotton. During the evening's fun one of the hats came in contact with a gas jet and the girl's body became enveloped in flames. The others rushed to her rescue, among them May Steves, and their clothing also caught fire. Several of the girls were burned to death, among them Miss Steves. The unhappy mother never fully recovered from the blow.

A few years ago Mrs. Steves moved from her home in the village on account of failing health and went to live with a niece, Mrs. Harry W. Clark of Chardon, Ohio, after a lifelong residence in this vicinity. She was 87 years of age.

The body of Mrs. Steves arrived here on Thursday, and the funeral was held at the Weld chapel on Saturday afternoon, with Rev. Charles Palmatier of Newark [Universalist] officiating. Burial was made in Riverside Cemetery, Gypsum.

Mrs. Steves is survived by one brother, William G. Bell of Chardon, Ohio; one niece, Mrs. Harry W. Clark, and three nephews, Dr. William Spencer Bell, Dayton Lloyd and Adelbert Bell.

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[1] This obituary does not mention that she was a long-time member of the Clifton Springs Universalist Society and that she had donated a memorial window to the church in her daughter May's name.