

The Oddest Thing Ever Found in a Pocket

by Cami Park

On an October day in 1909 Mrs. Prudence O'Kannady, industrious wife of Mr. Joseph Patrick O'Kannady of Corn Falls, Nebraska, discovered, while sorting clothing for the wash, in the pocket of a set of dungarees belonging to her youngest son Rufus, a tiny human head. When questioned, eight-year-old Rufus claimed to have won it in a game of marbles from an opponent whose name he could not recall. Though the head was scuffed and its nose and prominent features worn to near smoothness, the minute, lashless eyes still blinked, and the mouth moved spastically, though no sound could be heard. Rufus begged to keep this unusual find, as it was his best knuckler, but Joseph appropriated it, and placed it, for safe keeping, in an old cigar box along with a watch that had belonged to his father, a ticket stub from a World's Fair he had attended a few years back, and some grain receipts, bringing it out (to Prudence's everlasting chagrin) only for company.

It is not known what eventually became of the head, though it is assumed it was destroyed in a fire caused by the spontaneous combustion of the O'Kannady's mulch pile. The family was unharmed, but Prudence O'Kannady's chicken coop and prize chickens were completely destroyed, along with a good part of the house. Though the room in which the cigar box was kept was largely undamaged, the cigar box itself was nowhere to be found and it was assumed that it had been caught up in the conflagration somehow and consumed. In the face of their adversity, the O'Kannadys prevailed; a finer house was built, and a bigger chicken coop replenished with fatter hens and hardier roosters. The family prospered, and Rufus O'Kannady went on to an esteemed political career, serving with distinction in the Nebraska State Legislature

until his death at eighty-nine years of age. The tiny, frantic head was never seen again.

