

## **Anger as remains of soldiers from Revolutionary and Civil war are dug up and their bones spilled throughout historic cemetery**

**Historical cemetery dating back to 1758 holds graves of veterans from the Revolutionary War, Civil War and World World I**

**Among those dug up was the grave of 14-month Emma Jane McElmurray who was buried in 1884**

Caretakers of one of Georgia's oldest cemeteries say the scene was heart-breaking: A toddler's bones were spilled on the ground. The uniform buried with a soldier in another plot was strewn on the ground.

Now, a reward of more than \$2,000 is being offered for information on the desecration at the Old Church Cemetery, which dates to 1758 in the east Georgia countryside near Waynesboro.

Clothing buried with a soldier was removed, leaving his bones exposed, Burke County sheriff's Sgt. Sean Cochran said.



Desecrated: A small cast iron casket that contained the remains of a 14-month-old girl is seen after being dug up and its contents spilled on the ground at the Old Church Cemetery near Waynesboro, Georgia



Vandalized: Caretakers at the Old Church Cemetery are offering a reward for information leading to the suspects who left bones exposed and the uniform of a buried soldier lying on the ground

Among the soldiers desecrated were those dating back to the Revolutionary War, Civil War, and World War I, he said.

Relic hunting is a possible motive, he said, though authorities aren't certain what the motivation was.

'Most of the time when soldiers were buried, they were buried with their items to keep the enemy soldiers from getting them,' Cochran said.

Leroy Bell Jr., commander of the American Legion post that cares for the cemetery, discovered the damage on Saturday.

'Somebody is very sick to do something like this, to desecrate a grave,' Bell told [WFXG](#).

A small cast iron casket containing remains of 14-month Emma Jane McElmurray, buried in 1884, was removed and its contents dumped out, Bell said.



Torn off: Clothes belonging to a soldier sit on the ground after being removed from a grave by vandals who allegedly stole its buttons

'They took it completely out and dumped everything out in the perimeter of the family plot,' Bell told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

'It was just total devastation,' he recalled.

'I thought "why in God's name could anybody do anything like this?"' he said. 'I just can't understand it, other than the fact they were wanting some kind of trinkets.'

Cochran said authorities don't know what items were buried with the bodies, so they're not sure what might have been stolen from the bodies and the graves.



History: The Old Church cemetery, as this plaque tells, was build during the Revolutionary War and has seen been maintained by the Leaders of American Legion Post 120



No honor: Among the soldiers desecrated were those dating back to the Revolutionary War, Civil War, and World War I



Torn up: The site of where one of the graves was dug up, its marker knocked over, is seen here

All of the buttons had been removed from the military clothing left on the ground, which appeared to be a soldier's uniform coat, Bell said.

Leaders of American Legion Post 120 are planning to rededicate the soldiers' graves and restore the monuments that were damaged, Bell said.

'It's just going to take a little time because we're just a small American Legion here in Waynesboro and we don't have that many members,' he said.

They're currently accepting donations to make the reward larger.