

Irish Ghost Story

There is a supposedly true ghost story from Ireland that is very well known, though maybe not in Pictou. The story itself is about Lady Beresford, and was recorded by her granddaughter, Betty Cobbe, in the early 1700s in Curraghmore, County Waterford. The story was not intended to be for entertainment, but a historical account of a sibling pact that proved more than spooky.

When Lady Beresford was a child, she was an orphan. Her name was Nichola Hamilton. She was taken in by a foster family along with a boy named John. Neither child remembered much of their childhood before moving into the foster house, but their foster father was atheist. He spent much of his time arguing with the children who believed in heaven and an after life. Though they were loyal to their beliefs, their foster father gave them doubt. One day, John and Nichola decided that they could prove their beliefs to each other. They made a pact that whoever died first would appear to the other to prove life after death existed.

John and Nichola grew up, and Nichola married Sir Tristram Beresford, who was the oldest son of Richard, Earl of Tyrone, and Lady Dorothy Annesley, daughter of Arthur, Earl of Anglesey. She woke up one night to her foster brother standing beside her bed. He asked if she remembered their childhood pact. She nodded. He said, "I'm dead Nichola, and I can tell you your future". Nichola, frightened, nodded again. "Your husband will die, and you will remarry. You will have four children. You will die on your 47th birthday". Nichola, doubting the situation, asked if he was being serious. John grabbed her wrist, causing the skin to immediately decay, and then he disappeared. She wore a black ribbon everyday to cover the scar.

Her husband died, as John forewarned, and she remarried. She also had four children. But on the day of her 47th birthday, nothing out of the ordinary occurred. Relieved and feeling a bit silly about believing her foster brother's vision, she planned a grand 48th birthday party the following year. During the party, surrounded by family and friends, she proclaimed, "I am 48 years old today!". To which the clergyman laughed and said, "No my dear, you're 47 today". Nichola panicked, asking why he would say that, and he said after receiving the party invitation he found her birth record. He had looked at it just days before. It was her 47th birthday. Nichola screamed, "You have signed my death warrant!".

Nichola ran to her bedroom, wrote out and signed her will. She climbed into her bed, fell asleep, and did not wake up again. KW