

## 1905 Tragedy Leaves Many Wounds For Staver Family

I came across this tragic accident in the Monroe Evening Times of July 20, 1905. Remember as you read this that this incident took place on a farm south of the Staver Church, now known as Saint Peters United Methodist Church, which still operates just east of the intersection of what are now County Highways P and HK. Remember that in those days the farmer's lawns might be a couple feet tall. He wasn't using a lawn mower like we are familiar with today, but rather the same sickle mower that he would cut the alfalfa field with before baling. It would have a blade out to the side for a few feet.

"The little son of Perry Staver, who lives near the Staver church in Cadiz, had both feet cut off in a mower yesterday.

"The child is twenty-eight months old and was in the grass in the front yard some distance from the Staver house. Mr. Staver started to mow the front yard and while at work with his machine a cry went up that created terror in his heart, for his own son, who, in some manner unknown to him, got in the grass and was not visible, and was caught in the sharp knife of the mower.

"It was found that one foot had been cut off above the ankle while the sickle knives had chopped into the other leg so deep that amputation was afterwards necessary.

"Drs. Burrell and Willis, of Winslow, were called by telephone, and they covered the three miles from Winslow to the Staver farm in a very short time. Dr. J. H. Stealy, of Freeport, was afterwards called.

"The little fellow, while terrible injured, stood the pain remarkably well for a child of his age.

"Neighbors reached the Staver home quickly and everything possible was done to make the little fellow as comfortable as possible until the arrival of the physician.

"Dr. Stealy dressed the injuries and it is now believed that the child will recover unless new complications develop.

"Mrs. Staver is prostrate at the terrible misfortune that has occurred. She is known here as Miss Nellie Howe, her father being Zach Howe, of Freeport.

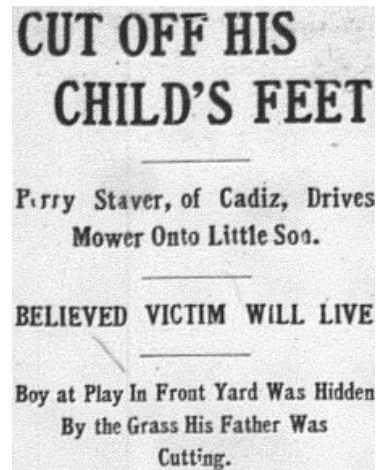
"The parents were married three and one-half years ago and this is their eldest child, and they were very [fond] of it. They had made arrangements to go to Portland next week."

The update in the paper the next day said that the child (whose name was never mentioned) was doing fairly well. He had lost considerable blood and was quite weak as a result. He stood the operation, which took off one limb just above the ankle and the other several inches above the ankle, exceedingly well. Mrs. Staver was still quite ill in consequence of the shock. Her husband had been constantly at the side of his son since the accident occurred.

A note in the March 8, 1909 paper, gleaned from the Winslow Register, stated that F. B. Staver and his wife went to Chicago with their son to have another pair of limbs made for him. This would be the third set they had made at that time.

After reading of this horrific accident, I wondered what happened to the family. I was as much interested in the mental health of the parents as to what happened to the son who had lost his feet. They didn't have prosthetics like we have today and each person was basically responsible for their own mental health. I found out that the father was Perry Bowen Staver as was the son. The son was occasionally referred to as Bowen. The mother was Nellie Howe before her marriage. There was also a daughter, Celesta "Lettie," who was about a year younger than the son.

They were living on Rice Street in Winslow where they owned their home in 1920. Perry was 49 and was listed as a stock buyer. His wife was a year younger and the children were 16 and 15. They moved to 629 West Lincoln shortly afterward. Three years later the father passed away on June 23 "in the 53rd year of his life." His obituary stated that his death might have been stress-



This was a headline from the July 20, 1905 issue of the Monroe Evening Times.

related and that he owned two farms near Winslow and was the vice president of Winslow State Bank.

The family continued to live in that house. Nellie was the head of the household and was also listed as a housekeeper in the 1930 census. Not only were Perry and Celesta living with her, but so were two teenage children of her son, George Emrich, from a former marriage. There were no occupations listed for anyone else; Perry was listed as a cripple.

The family, Nellie, Perry, Lettie, and Barbara, were still living at the same address in 1940. Nellie passed away in 1950, but I was not able to find an obituary for her. Census records are not available for 1950 yet. A very short obituary appeared for son Perry in a Freeport paper in April 1968 that stated that he passed away from a self-inflicted gunshot wound on April 4, 1968 at the age of 65. He had been living with Lettie at the family home. Lettie lived to the age of 98, passing away in 2003. Perry, Nellie, son Perry, and Lettie Staver and Barbara Emrich (1916 - 1944) are all buried at Oakland Cemetery in Freeport.