

Early Autos Cause Disagreement in Monroe

A person today might have a hard time imagining what it was like when the people and horses who had dominated the roads of the county met with the new horseless carriages. The horses were startled and the people had a difficult time controlling the horse and whatever rig they were riding in. I found the following incident dealing with an automobile in 1909 to be very interesting. Remember that cars had been seen in Monroe for about eight years at the time of this incident, but may not have been as often out in the more remote rural areas.

Robert F. Reiner, Adams township, was on his way home from Monroe on the morning of October 22. He was driving his horse and had a new two-wheeled cart and harness that he had just purchased in the city. He was surprised by an automobile that suddenly came up behind him on the Argyle road seven miles northwest of the city. As the machine struck the cart, the horse jumped to one side and jerked the driver out of danger. Reiner had a slight injury that made him lame. He claimed that the automobile belonged to Percy Holloway who was accompanied by a number of hunters. Reiner consulted with attorney J. L. Sherron and made plans to bring a suit unless settlement was made.

Holloway and his passengers denied that they were in any way to blame for the accident. They said that they gave Reiner warning twice, that he turned and saw the auto coming, but made no move to give the road to the auto. As Mr. Holloway turned out to the left to pass, Reiner also turned to the left making a "smash-up" unavoidable. The front fender caught Reiner's left wheel. The horse jumped to the right and jerked Reiner safely away from the machine. Reiner, at that time, seemed to realize his mistake and did not blame Holloway. The machine was stopped within two or three feet as it was running slowly.

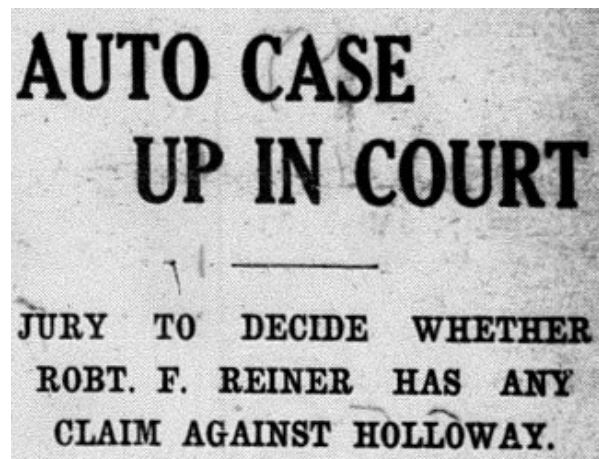
Reiner had been to town with a team, but one of his horses got kicked. He borrowed the cart and an old harness of Fitzgibbons Bros. The cart and harness were considered of little value, so there was really little damage done. Passengers who were in the auto said that Reiner was very lucky that the horse jerked him out of danger.

Reiner later claimed there was \$35 in damages and started an action before Justice Saucerman to collect it. The matter came up for hearing on November 1. District Attorney McGrath, who was defending Holloway, filed an answer and the hearing was set for Wednesday, November 10.

Harry Bangs, Robert Crow, Richard Stewart, Bert Crouch, John Schneider, and Jacob Benkert served on the jury in the afternoon trial. Michael Joyce, who was one of the passengers in the auto that day and also a witness at the trial, "convulsed the spectators in his sparring with McGrath. Mr. Joyce is not particularly friendly to automobiles and don't care who knows it." Holloway contended that according to the rules of the road, he was not responsible for the accident. It was reported the next day that the jury was unable to agree and was discharged at 11:30 that night. Four of the jurors were against the claim made and two stood out for damages for Reiner. The case went to the jury shortly before 6 o'clock and was adjourned for three weeks.

It was reported in the Monroe Evening Times of December 4 that the case had been settled out of court. Holloway accepted a proposal made by Reiner that the two split the costs. Reiner admitted that he was induced to start the action against his judgement and did not wish to press it further. "Anyway, the case is amicably settled as far as the two parties are concerned and if they meet on the road again they will have no trouble."

One could tell that something was going on at the beginning of this as the story seemed to change. It was interesting that Reiner later mentioned that he had been "induced" to go to court. It is a shame they had to waste court time and pay lawyers fees to be able to settle the disagreement.



This headline comes from the Monroe Evening Times of November 10, 1909.

It was courteous of Mr. Holloway to split the cost of damages with Mr. Reiner after the court hearing. Holloway was an auto dealer in Monroe having first partnered with Fred W. Miller on the corner of 16th Avenue and 9th Street. It was there that they broke ground in February 1908. Only a few months before the incident with Mr. Reiner he had partnered with a Mr. Patterson, built a garage on 11th Street west of the square, and opened the dealership in May. His partner retired just a month before this incident.